



# **LACUS FORUM XXXV**

**Language and Linguistics in  
North America 1608–2008:  
Diversity and Convergence**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

© 2009 The Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States (LACUS). This volume of the LACUS Forum is being made available by the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 license. See below.

## YOUR RIGHTS

This electronic copy is provided free of charge with no implied warranty. It is made available to you under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license version 3.0

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>)

Under this license you are free:

- **to Share** — to copy, distribute and transmit the work
- **to Remix** — to adapt the work

Under the following conditions:

- **Attribution** — You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- **Noncommercial** — You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

With the understanding that:

- **Waiver** — Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.
- **Other Rights** — In no way are any of the following rights affected by the license:
  - Your fair dealing or fair use rights;
  - The author's moral rights;
  - Rights other persons may have either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or privacy rights.

**Notice:** For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do this is with a link to the web page cited above.

For inquiries concerning commercial use of this work, please visit

<http://lacus.weebly.com/publications.html>

**Cover:** The front cover of this document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>) and may not be altered in any fashion. The lacus “lakes” logo and Université Laval logo on the cover are trademarks of lacus and Université Laval respectively. The Université Laval logo is used here with permission from the trademark holder. No license for use of these trademarks outside of redistribution of this exact file is granted. These trademarks may not be included in any adaptation of this work.

**LACUS  
FORUM  
XXXV**

***Language and Linguistics in  
North America 1608–2008:  
Diversity and Convergence***

*LACUS Forum* 35 Referees

Barbara Bacz  
David Bennett  
Patricia Casey Sutcliffe  
Douglas Coleman  
Michael Cummins



Patrick Duffley  
Connie Eble  
Toby Griffen  
Michael Kliffer  
Syd Lamb



Arle Lommel  
Deryle Lonsdale  
Alan Melby  
Robert Orr  
Bill Spruiell



Lois Stanford  
Linda Stump Rashidi  
Bill Sullivan  
Luke Van Buuren  
Beverley Watkins



# **LACUS FORUM XXXV**

***Language and Linguistics in  
North America 1608–2008:  
Diversity and Convergence***

**Edited by**

**Patricia Sutcliffe,  
Lois M. Stanford &  
Arle R. Lommel**



**THE LINGUISTIC ASSOCIATION OF CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES**

Copyright © 2009 The Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States

FIRST EDITION

Published by LACUS, the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States, in Houston, Texas, USA. Current address and contact information for LACUS can be found on the World Wide Web at *<http://www.lacus.org>*.

Manufactured in the United States.

ISSN 0195-377X

# CONTENTS

PREFACE

vii



<b>I. Featured Lectures</b>	<b>1</b>
1. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:	3
THEME AND TOPIC IN WRITTEN FRENCH AND ENGLISH: A PERSPECTIVE ON COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	
<i>Michael Cummings</i>	
2. GENDER, TRANSITIVITY, AND PERSON IN ALGONKIAN AND INUKTITUT	21
<i>John Hewson</i>	
3. LANGUAGE PRACTICES IN LOUISIANA: THE SWITCH FROM WRITTEN FRENCH TO WRITTEN ENGLISH WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH	31
<i>Sylvie Dubois</i> <i>Emilie Leumas</i>	
4. WORDING OR HOW ACCESS “GOT VERBED”	45
<i>Walter Hirtle</i>	
5. PRESIDENTS’ POST-DOCTORAL PRIZE:	57
LANGUAGE SHIFT IN THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH PRESS OF WEST MICHIGAN	
<i>Kara VanDam</i>	



<b>II. Selected Lectures</b>	<b>67</b>
6. EXISTENCE AND EVALUATION: FRENCH <i>IL</i> AND <i>ÇA</i> IMPERSONALS	69
<i>Michel Achard</i>	
7. ASPECT AND EXPRESSIONS OF HABITUALITY IN POLISH	81
<i>Barbara Bacz</i>	
8. THE PERCEPTION OF LINGUISTIC AND NONLINGUISTIC INPUTS: THE CASE OF ROAD SIGNS	91
<i>David Bowie</i> <i>Jeanne M. Bowie</i>	
9. TRANSLATING JEAN-CHARLES PANDOSY: <i>DE MARSEILLE À</i> <i>L’OUEST CANADIEN, 1847 À 1891</i>	103
<i>Lorin Card</i>	
10. THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF ABSTRACTIONS: ABSTRACTIONS, DAMNED ABSTRACTIONS, AND DAMNED LYING ABSTRACTIONS	109
<i>Douglas W. Coleman</i>	
11. APPROCHE INTERLOCUTIVE DE L’IMPERFECTIVITE	123
<i>Catherine Douay</i>	

<i>Daniel Roulland</i>	
12. CAN VS. BE ABLE TO: WHY "SEMI-MODALS" ARE NOT MODALS	133
<i>Ryan Fisher</i>	
<i>Patrick J. Duffley</i>	
13. THE LIAR OR THE MAD DOG(S)? ANOTHER LACUS LOOK AT THE LIAR PARADOX	143
<i>Rennie Gonsalves</i>	
14. PRE-INDO-EUROPEAN VERB-SUBJECT ORDER	153
<i>Toby D. Griffen</i>	
15. THE LEXICAL CONTRIBUTION OF FOR IN THE FOR + SUBJECT + TO INFINITIVE	157
<i>Carleen Gruntman</i>	
16. THE MEDIEVAL ORIGINS OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR: THE OCCITAN GRAMMATICAL TRADITION	165
<i>Roy Hagman</i>	
17. "QUALITY OF LANGUAGE": THE CHANGING FACE OF QUEBEC PRESCRIPTIVISM	173
<i>Michael D. Kliffer</i>	
18. PLACES NAMED FOR AN ODOR, OR RECALLING THE FORMER HOME	183
<i>Saul Levin</i>	
19. PROLEGOMENA TO SAUL LEVIN'S STUDIES OF SEMITIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN	187
<i>J.P. Maher</i>	
20. DES RÉACTIONS AU COMPLIMENT EN FRANÇAIS CAMEROUNAIS: ESQUISSE D'UNE TYPOLOGIE	205
<i>Bernard Mulo Farenkia</i>	
21. ROBERT E. HOWARD: GETTING THE LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND RIGHT	219
<i>Robert Orr</i>	
22. LA REPRÉSENTATION EN TROIS DIMENSIONS DES SYSTÈMES PHONOLOGIQUES	237
<i>jean-François Smith</i>	
23. HYPOTAXIS AND MODAL RESPONSIBILITY	247
<i>William C. Spruiell</i>	
24. NINETEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN PERCEPTIONS OF LANGUAGE IN NORTH AMERICA	257
<i>Patricia Casey Sutcliffe</i>	
25. SOME MORE READINGS OF ALICE AND THE CATERPILLAR	271
<i>Lucas van Buuren</i>	



LANGUAGE INDEX	281
COLOPHON	284



## PREFACE

**L**ACUS FORUM XXV marks a major change in the thirty-five year tradition of LACUS volumes. Although LACUS authors have been provided with PDF versions of their papers for their own use for a number of years, the primary publication and delivery format remained hard copy. This year, for the first time in the history of the Association, we are distributing a *LACUS Forum* volume entirely in electronic format (although individuals who wish a paper copy will be able to purchase one). Not only is the current year's volume being placed online, but all of our volumes going back to LACUS Forum 23 are now available online (<http://www.lacus.org/volumes/>). We hope that the shift from paper into e-media will make LACUS contributions more easily accessible to a broader audience and, consequently, better known and appreciated.

The 2008 LACUS conference, held June 1–14, 2008 on the Campus of Laval University (Université Laval), coincided with the 400th anniversary of the founding of Québec, the oldest French city on the American continent. Université Laval is the oldest Francophone university in the Americas: It traces its origins back to 1663, when Monseigneur François de Laval, the first bishop of New France, founded the Séminaire de Québec with the authorization of the King Louis XIV. Given the setting, the Forum theme was fitting: “Language and Linguistics in North America 1608–2008: Diversity and Convergence.”

The invited lectures presented during the meeting reflected the linguistic diversity of North America well, especially French in its many North American varieties. Sylvie Dubois' inaugural lecture documented the long-lasting presence of French in the written records of Louisiana Catholic parishes. Annette Boudreau's French-language plenary presentation emphasized the French roots and basic morpho-syntactic characteristic of the language spoken by contemporary Acadians. An evening lecture by Walter Hirtle focused on the French linguist Gustave Guillaume's theory of the word. The Friday afternoon plenary by Claude Poirier centered on Quebec French and summarized the issues of Quebec's struggle for independence by discussing the content of contemporary Quebec dictionaries of French. The presidential address, “Theme and Topic in Written French and English: A Perspective on Comparative Discourse Analysis,” was delivered by Michael Cummings of York University. In contrast to these French-oriented presentations, John Hewson reminded us of the native linguistic diversity that has existed alongside both French and English by tackling the theoretical problem of describing certain intricate grammatical categories in the Native American languages Algonkian and Inuktitut.

This volume contains four papers by invited speakers and a selection of twenty-one peer-reviewed papers out of the forty-five presented at the meeting. Papers at the 2008 conference were presented in either English (thirty-seven papers) or French (eight papers). As a result, we have returned to the French-English tradition at the roots of the Association by including three papers in French.

For a number of years LACUS has actively encouraged the participation of younger scholars in the Association by granting prizes to those papers by junior scholars deemed to

contribute the most to linguistic knowledge. Kara VanDam (Kaplan University) received the Presidents' Post-Doctoral Prize for "Language Shift in the Christian Reformed Church Press of West Michigan." Sondes Hamdi of Laval University, received the Presidents' Pre-Doctoral Prize for the paper "Conceptual Metaphors of Time in English and in Arabic: A Comparative Cognitive Study," which was presented in French.

The Forum was attended by more than seventy participants. In addition to the numerous tourist attractions provided by the City of Québec for its 400th jubilee year and the European atmosphere of Vieux Québec, conference attendees enjoyed a boat ride on the St. Lawrence organized specially for the LACUS participants. In addition they experienced a variety of typical local French dishes as part of the traditional Presidential Banquet held at the Hôtel Universel in Ste-Foy.

LACUS wishes to express heartfelt gratitude to this volume's editors, Patricia Casey Sutcliffe, Lois Stanford, and Arle Lommel, for their hard work, time, and dedication. We especially thank Arle, who has made possible the electronic distribution of this volume. Special thanks are also due to Toby Griffen (LACUS Publications Director), Doug Coleman (LACUS Program Director), and to the twenty-member review committee for their time and help in preparing the meeting and ensuring the quality of the papers accepted for presentation at the forum and included in this volume.

Last but not least, the Association's thanks go to Laval University's administration for their financial and technical assistance in hosting the 35th LACUS Forum. We are particularly grateful to Dean Thierry Belleguic of the Faculty of Letters and to Dr. Manuel Echevarria-Espanol, Head of the Languages and Linguistics Department, for their participation and interest in the meeting.

Finally, as the conference host and local organizer I would like to acknowledge the generous assistance received from my colleague Patrick Duffley before he fell sick, the Department secretaries Monique Rhéaume, Louise Veuilleux and Nathalie Hupé, as well as the student volunteers Diane Brochu, Sondes Hamdi, Andrée Lepage, Laura Negrea, Ryan Fisher and Jean-François Smith, who helped ensure that the conference ran smoothly

– Barbara Bacz  
Local Host and Coordinator  
LACUS Forum 35

I



FEATURED  
LECTURES





# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS



## THEME AND TOPIC IN WRITTEN FRENCH AND ENGLISH: A PERSPECTIVE ON COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

MICHAEL CUMMINGS  
*York University, Toronto*

ON THIS OCCASION OF THE FOUR-HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF QUEBEC, I wish to consider the two official languages of Canada together from a common perspective. This perspective is that of the discourse function of clause Theme. The Theme/Rheme distinction can be found in the clause grammars of both languages. In both languages, the descriptive definitions of these grammatical elements are very nearly the same. Also the same are the contributions which these elements make to the rhetoric, that is, the discourse structures, of both French and English.

1. THEME AND RHEME IN SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS. The approach which I take to the grammar of Theme/Rheme is largely that of M.A.K. Halliday, who was President of LACUS in 1982–1983, and gave us, at the tenth LACUS Forum here at Laval University exactly 25 years ago, a presidential address ‘On the ineffability of grammatical categories’ (1984). The original formulation of his Theme/Rheme theory, however, is contained in a paper published in *The Journal of Linguistics* in 1967 (211–23). His theory of Theme/Rheme differs significantly from the earlier tradition of the Prague School, as set out, for example, in the book by Jan Firbas, *Functional Sentence Perspective*, in 1992. In the definition of Theme, the Functional Sentence Perspective approach places most emphasis on its discourse continuity aspect. Theme is carried most prominently by context-dependency, as opposed to semantic roles, or linearity (72).

1.1. THE HALLIDAYAN THEORY OF THEME. Halliday’s approach on the other hand makes a distinction between the continuity aspect as such, which he calls ‘the Given’, and a more general topicalizing function, which is his notion of Theme. In a great many instances this distinction is only notional, because what is ‘given’ is also apt to belong to the Theme. But Theme is a more general function because it can include non-propositional bits of grammar like conjunctions, finites, conjunctives, modal Adjuncts, and whatever else is apt to be found towards the beginning of the clause. In fact, for Halliday, the realization of Theme is almost entirely confined to the beginning of the clause (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004:64, 79–81). This too is very different from the Functional Sentence Perspective approach, in which Theme as continuity can be distributed throughout the clause. In Systemic Functional Linguistics, the Theme part of an independent declarative mood clause is now widely considered to be its beginning through to a pre-verbal Subject (Cummings 2004:344–45). Other moods, and dependent clauses, have other criteria.

Nor, when at last we met, were the circumstances propitious. It was shortly before midnight in early March; I had been entertaining the college intellectuals to mulled claret; the fire was roaring, the air of my room heavy with smoke and spice, and my mind weary with metaphysics. I threw open my windows and from the quad outside came the not uncommon sounds of bibulous laughter and unsteady steps. A voice said: 'Hold up'; another, 'Come on'; another, 'Plenty of time ... House ... till Tom stops ringing'; and another, clearer than the rest, 'D'you know I feel most unaccountably unwell. I must leave you a minute,' and there appeared at my window the face I knew to be Sebastian's, but not, as I had formerly seen it, alive and alight with gaiety; he looked at me for a moment with unfocused eyes and then, leaning forward well into the room, he was sick.

It was not unusual for dinner parties to end in that way; there was in fact a recognized tariff for the scout on such occasions; we were all learning, by trial and error, to carry our wine. There was also a kind of insane and endearing orderliness about Sebastian's choice, in his extremity, of an open window. But, when all is said, it remained an unpropitious meeting.

His friends bore him to the gate and, in a few minutes, his host, an amiable Etonian of my year, returned to apologize. He, too, was tipsy and his explanations were repetitive and, towards the end, tearful. 'The wines were too various,' he said: 'it was neither the quality nor the quantity that was at fault. It was the mixture. Grasp that and you have the root of the matter. To understand all is to forgive all.'

'Yes,' I said, but it was with a sense of grievance that I faced Lunt's reproaches next morning.

**Figure 1.** Extract from *Brideshead Revisited* (Waugh 1983:38–39).

Systemic Functional Linguistics owes much of its current understanding of clause Theme to Peter Fries. Fries reinterprets clause Theme as a set of markers for local discourse structure, in his terms, the local 'method of development' of a text. The method of development includes both local topical continuity, and variations in the local structure. The Theme stretches of clauses contain both markers of continuity and markers of ordered variation. In effect, the text marks its progress within the Themes of successive clauses. The role of the Rheme stretches is very different. These contribute the informational development of the text, largely in lexical form (Fries 1981/83:116, 119, 121, 125, 135; 1995:323–26; 2002:125–26).

1.2. A *BRIDESHEAD* TEXT. The theory was first formulated on the basis of English text, so I will try to demonstrate it first with a short English text. My more or less arbitrary selection is from Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, in **Figure 1**. It is a neatly defined short episode that narrates the end of another dinner party—a dinner party like our own intellectually but, I trust, unlike our own alcoholically. As a descriptive narrative, it is so successful that North American tourists in Oxford are said to ask to see the window Sebastian Flyte was sick through.



The diagram in **Figure 2** (overleaf) analyzes the numbered clauses for Theme and Rheme. Theme stretches are separated from the Rheme by a vertical line. The last grammatical element in each clause is separated from the rest of the Rheme by a square bracket. This in Fries's terms is the 'N-rheme', or typical location of 'new' information (2002:125–26). Grammatical elements showing topical continuity through presuming reference are bolded (unless they are too deeply embedded to matter). Rhetorical segments of the episode are divided by a long horizontal from the left. The heavy black line after clause twenty-eight marks the division of the episode into two parts.

The very first rhetorical segment is clauses one and two. This offers what Jim Martin calls a 'hypertheme' or topic statement for the whole episode (1992:434–48). The clause 1 Theme stretch is very distinctively marked by initial conjunctive 'Nor' followed by an interrupting subordinate clause, followed by the Subject of a copular relational clause. The structure is precisely mirrored in the Theme stretch of clause 28: initial conjunctive 'But' followed by an interrupting subordinate clause, followed by the Subject of another copular relational clause. These two clauses neatly bracket the rhetorical first half of the episode. Of the other four rhetorical segments in the first half, three are announced by impersonal Subjects in the Themes of their first clauses. The one dialogic segment is announced iconically by the Theme and Subject 'A voice'.

In part two, the distinctiveness of the three segments is achieved by the pronoun references in Themes of the first segment, and the return of the solemn impersonal 'it' in the Theme of the last clause. Besides all this structural marking, you can evaluate the continuity aspect of the Themes simply by inspecting the bolded presuming references. Presuming references to be noted here include all pro-forms, proper names, comparatives, and nominal groups with definite articles, demonstratives, or possessives, that make for anaphoric reference and are not too deeply embedded (Martin 1992:102–40).

**2. THEME AND RHEME IN OTHER LANGUAGES.** Systemic Functional linguists have been hard at work relating the Theme/Rheme distinction to languages other than English. Among non-Indo-European languages, at least Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Pitjantjatjara, Tagalog, Telugu and Vietnamese have gotten significant attention (Caffarel, Martin & Matthiessen 2004). According to Jim Martin, for example, Tagalog like English has both unmarked and marked Theme; but unlike English, Tagalog tends to show unmarked Theme mapped together with unmarked 'new' instead of 'given'—and at the ends of clauses, no less, instead of at the beginnings (Martin 2004:280).

**2.1. FRENCH AND GERMAN.** Among Indo-European languages other than English, most Systemic Functional publication on Theme/Rheme has concerned Spanish, Italian, German and French. The theory of Theme in German stands apart because it supposes that the Theme stretch largely extends only up to the Finite. Since German has a strong preference for ordering the Finite second in the independent declarative clause, this effectively limits Theme to one or two elements in the famous *Vorfeld*, the place before the Finite. Another effect of this principle is to make the mapping together of Theme and Subject much less frequent in German than in English or French (Steiner & Teich 2004:169–181).

1	¶Nor,   ...	(22)	... <b>he</b>   was [ sick.
2	when   at last <b>we</b> [ met,	24	¶It   was not unusual [ for dinner parties to end in that way;
(1)	... were <b>the circumstances</b>   [ propitious.	25	there was   in fact a recognized tariff for <b>the scout</b> [ on such occasions;
3	<b>It</b>   was shortly before midnight [ in early March;	26	<b>we</b>   were all learning, by trial and error, [ to carry our wine.
4	<b>I</b>   had been entertaining the college intellectuals [ to mulled claret;	27	There was   also a kind of insane and endearing orderliness [ about <b>Sebastian's choice</b> , in his extremity, of an open window.
5	<b>the fire</b>   [ was roaring,	28	But, ...
6	the air of <b>my room</b>   heavy [ with smoke and spice,	29	when   all [ is said,
7	and <b>my mind</b>   weary [ with metaphysics.	(28)	... <b>it</b>   remained [ an unpropitious meeting.
8	<b>I</b>   threw open [ <b>my windows</b>	30	¶ <b>His friends</b>   bore <b>him</b> [ to the gate
9	and from the <b>quad outside</b>   came [ the not uncommon sounds of bibulous laughter and unsteady steps.	31	and, in a few minutes, <b>his host</b> , an amiable Etonian of my year,   returned [ to apologize.
10	A voice   [ said:	32	<b>He</b> ,   too, was [ tipsy
11	'Hold   [ up';	33	and <b>his explanations</b>   were [ repetitive
12	<b>another</b> ,	34	and,   towards the end, [ tearful.
13	'Come   on';	35	' <b>The wines</b>   were [ too various,'
14	<b>another</b> ,	36	<b>he</b>   [ said:
15	'Plenty of time ... House ...	37	'it   was neither [ <b>the quality</b> nor <b>the quantity</b> that was at fault.
16	till Tom   [ stops ringing';	38	It   was [ <b>the mixture</b> .
17	and <b>another</b> , clearer than the rest,	39	Grasp   [ <b>that</b>
18	'D'you know I   feel [ most unaccountably unwell.	40	and <b>you</b>   have [ the root of the matter.
19	<b>I</b>   must leave <b>you</b> [ a minute,'	41	To understand all   is [ to forgive all.'
20	and there appeared   at <b>my window</b> [ the face I knew to be Sebastian's, but not, as I had formerly seen it, alive and alight with gaiety;	42	¶'Yes, <b>I</b>   [ said,
21	<b>he</b>   looked at <b>me</b> for a moment [ with unfocused eyes	43	but it   was with a sense of grievance [ that I faced Lunt's reproaches next morning.
22	and then, ...		
23	leaning forward [ well into <b>the room</b> ,		

		Chain element distribution		Chain element density	
		No. elements	% of total	No. exp. elements	% of exp. elements
Theme		24	63%	42	57%
Rheme	Other	6	16%	44	14%
	N-rheme	8	21%	36	22%
	Total	14	37%	80	18%
General total		38	100%	122	31%

**Table 1.** Chain element distribution and density in the *Brideshead* text.

French is, on the whole, closer to English in the grammar of Theme/Rheme than any of the other European languages I have mentioned. In French, as in English, Theme in an independent declarative mood clause can be taken to include everything from the beginning of the clause through a pre-verbal Subject. The unmarked instance of topical Theme is the Subject. Other unmarked elements in the Theme stretch like conjunctives or conjunctions can be referred to as textual Themes rather than topical. Still other unmarked Theme elements like finites or modal Adjuncts can be referred to as interpersonal in function, rather than topical. Non-Subject topical Themes can occur before the Subject, as marked Themes (Caffarel 2006:168–72, 182).

3. QUANTIFICATION EXTENSION. In some previous LACUS papers and elsewhere I have tried to put the Theme/Rheme distinction on a quantitative basis (Cummings 2004, 2005, 2006, in press). The language of Theme stretches and the language of Rheme stretches are different languages in the sense of having different features. But the differences are not categorical, rather they are proportionate. Theme is relatively rich in grammatical forms, especially presuming reference, conjunctives, and of course conjunctions. Rheme is relatively rich in lexis and in lexical variety. I have developed various quantitative indices to measure the degree of these differences in different texts. My motive has been to try to demonstrate that the Theme/Rheme distinction is factored by our sense of pattern and expectation, and also to develop a comparative stylistics based on measurement.

3.1. *BRIDESHEAD* ANALYSIS. As an example of this analysis I will use the *Brideshead* text, and just the indices for presuming reference. In the diagram version of the text (**Figure 2**), bolded phrases represent presuming reference. Presuming reference occurs as chains of items all referring to the same referent. Indices that measure the proportions of chained presuming reference are set out in **Table 1** and **Table 2** (overleaf). The first half of **Table 1** gives the simple distribution of chain items among Theme, N-Rheme and the 'Other' part of the Rheme. The distribution turns out to be unusually distinctive in that Theme gets almost two-thirds of the items. In the Rheme, the higher proportion in the N-Rheme is very typical.

The second half of **Table 1** adjusts for the disproportionate distribution of clause elements with 'experiential', i.e., propositional, content between Theme and Rheme. Figures

		Long-chain distribution		Proportion	
		No. long chain elements in	% of total	No. chain elements	% of chain elements
Theme		19	68%	24	79%
Rheme	Other	6	21%	6	100%
	N-rheme	3	11%	8	38%
	Total	9	32%	14	64%
General total		28	100%	38	74%

**Table 2.** Long-chain element distribution and density in the *Brideshead* text.

for numbers of experiential elements are given, then percentages of experiential elements occurring in reference chains are derived. These percentages show that the disproportionate role of reference chains between Theme and Rheme is almost twice as significant as the simple distribution would lead one to believe.

**Table 2** limits itself just to the long chains, somewhat arbitrarily reckoned for a text segment of this size to be any chain of six or more items. There are just two chains of such length, that of the narrator, Charles Ryder, and that of Sebastian's host. The first half of **Table 2** shows the simple distribution of long chain items. This distribution turns out to be even more distinctive in that Theme gets even more than two-thirds of the long chain items. The second half of **Table 2** gives the proportions of long chain items among all the chain items in each part of the clause. The percentages here confirm that long chains play a more significant role in the Themes.

3.2. CORPUS STUDY. My short *Brideshead* text contains just 320 words. It says nothing therefore about the general tendencies of English. However there is readily available a sample corpus from the *British Component of the International Corpus of English*, at about 20,000 words, which consists of ten spoken and written texts in various genres, and comes fully parsed with a context-free phrase-structure grammar (2008). I have analyzed this for preverbal and postverbal pronoun distribution with the ICECUP search software. The results are that 79% of pronoun presuming reference in this corpus occurs in the Theme stretch, making the *Brideshead* proportions seem conservative. These results serve also to confirm similar studies of English text samples of long standing, e.g., Givon (1979:51–53, 1995:75–76).

4. ANALYZING THEME IN FRENCH TEXT. Now I want to show that the Fries hypothesis about Theme and the method of development, and my own quantitative procedures, can also apply to a French text. To provide a comparison with the narrative episode from *Brideshead*, I selected, more or less arbitrarily, another short, self-contained episode, this time from Yves Beauchemin's *Le matou*, which is found in **Figure 3**. In this passage, the protagonist, Florent Boissonneault, and his wife Élise, attend the supposed funeral of his supposed benefactor, M. Ratablavasky, at Montreal's Église Notre Dame.

Like the method of development of the *Brideshead* narrative, this one is divided among sub-episodes, which are either about Florent and Élise or about their constantly changing

Ils enfilèrent la rue Saint-Paul, puis la rue Saint-Sulpice, qui longeait l'église, et entrèrent par une porte latérale. – Dis donc, lui souffla Élise, n'as-tu pas un cousin qui est vicaire ici, toi?

Florent ne l'entendit pas. Son attention venait d'être happée par un catafalque dressé au milieu de l'allée centrale. En face, un prêtre agitait lentement les bras devant l'autel, tandis qu'un servent de messe montait les marches avec une précipitation qui tenait plus de la cour d'école que de l'église. Le chœur était faiblement illuminé et toute la nef plongée dans une pénombre triste et solennelle, pleine de senteurs d'encens et de relents de poussière. Florent fit signe à Élise de le suivre et se laissa tomber sur un agenouillement tout près du cercueil. Il se mit à le contempler avec un étonnement navré. Élise haussait les épaules et promenait son regard partout. À part le prêtre, un organiste et le servent de messe, ils se trouvaient seuls. – Je n'arrive pas à comprendre, murmura Florent. Son ami Galarneau n'a même pas pris la peine de venir...

Le célébrant descendit les marches de l'autel et s'avança dans l'allée, un goupillon à la main, suivi de l'enfant de chœur. Les orgues éclatèrent tout à coup. L'église parut effrayante, d'une ampleur colossale. – Incroyable, murmura Élise en observant son mari dont les épaules sautaient par saccades, tandis que, malgré ses efforts, elle sentait les larmes lui monter aux yeux.

Des porteurs apparurent, surgis d'entre les confessionnaux. C'était sans doute des employés de l'agence de pompes funèbres. Le prêtre murmura encore quelques formules, l'air absent, puis le cercueil fut soulevé et on l'emporta dans le transept vers une sortie latérale.

Élise et Florent le suivaient, incertains de ce qu'ils devaient faire. Un corbillard était stationné dans la rue au pied de l'escalier, les battants déjà ouverts. Sur le trottoir opposé, on voyait une serveuse de chez Stash en train de nettoyer la vitrine du restaurant. Élise resta sur le palier. Florent descendit les marches et s'approcha du fourgon au moment où, d'un vigoureux élan, les porteurs venaient d'y faire glisser le cercueil, avec des postures de joueurs de quilles. Personne ne s'occupait de lui. Le chauffeur s'installa au volant et fit démarrer le véhicule. Florent se pencha vers lui: – Est-ce que l'enterrement... Est-ce que vous allez...

– Crémation, mon jeune homme, crémation. Cérémonie strictement privée.

Avec un ensemble parfait, les quatre passagers allumèrent une cigarette et monsieur Ratablavasky entreprit son dernier voyage terrestre.

**Figure 3.** Extract from *Le matou* (Beauchemin 1985:50-51).

circumstances and their reactions to them.<sup>1</sup> The diagram in **Figure 4** (overleaf) shows the boundaries of the sub-episodes as long horizontal lines. What is different about this method of development is that, for the most part, the boundaries between the sub-episodes are marked only by the change in the identities of the referents maintained within the Themes of each of them. In that sense, topical consistency plays a role in variation as well as

<sup>1</sup> I have also described this passage in Cummings (in press).

1 ¶ Ils   enfilèrent [ la rue Saint-Paul, 2 puis   [ la rue Saint-Sulpice, 3 qui   longeait [ l'église, 4 et   entrèrent [ par une porte latérale. 5 – Dis   [ donc, 6 lui   souffla [ Élise, 7 n'as-tu   pas un cousin qui est vicaire ici, [ toi? 8 ¶ Florent   ne l'   entendit pas. 9 Son attention   venait d'être happée [ par un catafalque dressé au milieu de l'allée centrale.	19 À part le prêtre, un organiste et le servent de messe, ils   se trouvaient [ seuls. 20 – Je   [ n'arrive pas à comprendre, 21 murmura   [ Florent. 22 Son ami Galarneau   n'a même pas pris [ la peine de venir...	39 et on   l'emporta dans le transept [ vers une sortie latérale.
10 En face, un prêtre   agita lentement les bras [ devant l'autel, 11 tandis qu'un servent de messe   montait les marches [ avec une précipitation qui tenait plus de la cour d'école que de l'église. 12 Le choeur   était [ faiblement illuminé 13 et toute la nef   plongée [ dans une pénombre triste et solennelle, pleine de senteurs d'encens et de relents de poussière.	23 ¶ Le célebrant   descendit [ les marches de l'autel 24 et   s'avança [ dans l'allée, 25 un goupillon   [ à la main, 26   suivi [ de l'enfant de choeur. 27 Les orgues   éclatèrent [ tout à coup. 28 L'église   parut effrayante, [ d'une ampleur colossale.	40 ¶ Élise et Florent   le suivaient, [ incertains de ce qu'ils devaient faire. 41 Un corbillard   était stationné dans la rue [ au pied de l'escalier, 42 les battants   déjà [ ouverts. 43 Sur le trottoir opposé, on   voyait [ une serveuse de chez Stash en train de nettoyer la vitrine du restaurant.
14 Florent   fit signe [ à Élise de le suivre 15 et   se laissa tomber [ sur un agenouilloir tout près du cercueil. 16 Il   se mit à le contempler [ avec un étonnement navré. 17 Élise   haussait [ les épaules 18 et   promenait son regard [ partout.	29   [ – Incroyable, 30 murmura   Élise [ en observant son mari dont les épaules sautaient par saccades, 31 tandis que, malgré ses efforts, elle   [ sentait 32 les larmes   lui monter [ aux yeux. 33 ¶ Des porteurs   [ apparurent, 34   surgis [ d'entre les confessionnaux. 35 C'   était sans doute [ des employés de l'agence de pompes funèbres. 36 Le prêtre   murmura encore [ quelques formules, 37 l'air   [ absent, 38 puis le cercueil   [ fut soulevé	44 Élise   resta [ sur le palier. 45 Florent   descendit [ les marches 46 et   s'approcha du fourgon [ au moment où, d'un vigoureux élan, les porteurs venaient d'y faire glisser le cercueil, avec des postures de joueurs de quilles. 47 Personne   ne s'occupait [ de lui. 48 Le chauffeur   s'installa [ au volant 49 et   fit démarrer [ le véhicule. 50 Florent   se pencha [ vers lui: 51 – Est-ce que l'enterrement  ... 52 Est-ce que vous   allez... 53 –   Crémation, mon jeune homme, [ crémation. 54   [ Cérémonie strictement privée. 55 ¶ Avec un ensemble parfait, les quatre passagers   allumèrent [ une cigarette 56 et monsieur Ratablavasky   entreprit [ son dernier voyage terrestre.

Figure 4. Le matou extract annotated.

		Chain element distribution		Chain element density	
		No. elements	% of total	No. exp. elements	% of exp. elements
Theme		34	55%	49	69%
Rheme	Other	13	21%	60	22%
	N-rheme	15	24%	53	28%
	Total	28	45%	113	25%
General total		62	100%	162	38%

**Table 3.** Chain element distribution and density in the Le matou text.

		Long-chain distribution		Proportion	
		No. long chain elements in	% of total	No. chain elements	% of chain elements
Theme		17	65.4%	34	50%
Rheme	Other	5	19.2%	13	38%
	N-rheme	4	15.4%	15	27%
	Total	9	34.6%	28	32%
General total		26	100%	62	42%

**Table 4.** Long-chain element distribution in the Le matou text.

in continuity. Thus parts one, three, and five have Themes mainly referring to Florent and/or Élise. Parts two, four, and six by contrast have Themes referring mainly to parts of the church or participants in the rituals. However, the last three sub-episodes are consistently different from all those preceding. Here each sub-episode is introduced by a reference to Florent and/or Élise in the Theme of the first clause, after which the Themes refer to something else.

Quantitative analysis of the presuming reference distribution is found **Tables 3** and **4**. As before, the first half of **Table 3** shows the simple distribution of reference chain elements in Themes, N-rhemes and the Other part of the Rheme. The relative preponderance of reference items first in Themes (55%), then in N-rhemes (24%), is just what one expects from experience with English texts. The second half of this table again adjusts for the disproportion in numbers of experiential elements between Theme and Rheme. As with English text, the contrast in distribution between Theme and the parts of the Rheme is much more strongly revealed. **Table 4** again deals with the long chains, which belong of course to Florent and Élise respectively. In the first half of this table, the proportioning of the long chain elements between Themes and Rhemes is about the same as for the *Brideshead* text, near to a 65% / 35% split. In the second half of the table, exactly half of the reference elements in Themes belong to one or the other of these two long chains, as opposed to only 32% of the reference elements in Rhemes. This is the same association of the long chains with the Themes as in English text (Cummings, in press).

Die Nacht ist unerträglich. Wir können nicht schlafen, wir stieren vor uns hin und duseln. Tjaden bedauert, daß wir unsere angefressenen Brotstücke für die Ratten vergeudet haben. Wir hätten sie ruhig aufheben sollen. Jeder würde sie jetzt essen. Wasser fehlt uns auch, aber nicht so sehr.

Gegen Morgen, als es noch dunkel ist, entsteht Aufregung. Durch den Eingang stürzt ein Schwarm flüchtender Ratten und jagt die Wände hinauf. Die Taschenlampen beleuchten die Verwirrung. Alle schreien und fluchen und schlagen zu. Es ist der Ausbruch der Wut und der Verzweiflung vieler Stunden, der sich entlädt. Die Gesichter sind verzerrt, die Arme schlagen, die Tiere quietschen, es fällt schwer aufzuhören, fast hätte einer den andern angefallen.

Der Ausbruch hat uns erschöpft. Wir liegen und warten wieder. Es ist ein Wunder, daß unser Unterstand noch keine Verluste hat. Er ist einer der wenigen tiefen Stollen, die es jetzt noch gibt.

Ein Unteroffizier kriecht herein; er hat ein Brot bei sich. Drei Leuten ist es doch geglückt, nachts durchzukommen und etwas Proviant zu holen. Sie haben erzählt, daß das Feuer in unverminderter Stärke bis zu den Artillerieständen läge. Es sei ein Rätsel, wo die drüben so viele Geschütze hernähmen.

Wir müssen warten, warten. Mittags passiert das, womit ich schon rechnete. Einer der Rekruten hat einen Anfall. Ich hatte ihn schon lange beobachtet, wie er ruhelos die Zähne bewegte und die Fäuste ballte und schloß. Diese gehetzten, herausspringenden Augen kennen wir zur Genüge. In den letzten Stunden ist er nur scheinbar stiller geworden.

Jetzt steht er auf, unauffällig kriecht er durch den Raum, verweilt einen Augenblick und rutscht dann dem Ausgang zu. Ich lege mich herum und frage: „Wo willst du hin?“

**Figure 5.** Extract from *Im Westen nichts Neues* (Remarque, 1963:81).

5. ANALYZING THEME IN GERMAN TEXT. I wondered if I could find a useful contrast to the French/English similarities by applying the same analyses to German text. I have analyzed a narrative specimen from North America's favourite German novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (*Im Westen nichts Neues*) by Erich Maria Remarque, as set out in **Figure 5**. The diagram showing analysis of the method of development and the Theme/Rheme structures is found in **Figure 6**. In Theme demarcation, there are three clauses, 23, 31 and 42, in which my method of always including in Theme a Subject before the main verb extends the Theme beyond the *Vorfeld*. The method of development has four separate sub-episodes. Three of the four are introduced by explicit time references in Themes: 'Die Nacht...'; 'Gegen Morgen...'; 'Mittags...'. Part three however is introduced by a summary reference in a Theme to what has just occurred: 'Der Ausbruch...'. Other time references in Themes subdivide part four: 'In den letzten Stunden...' and immediately following: 'Jetzt...'. These thematized time references stand out all the more because the Themes in this passage are usually simple rather than multiple—even conjunctions are infrequent. Moreover the first and last of these sub-episodes maintain in their Themes a consistent set of participants: the dugout soldiers in one, and the narrator and his hapless recruit in four.



1	¶Die Nacht   ist [ unerträglich.	26	und   warten [ wieder.
2	Wir   [ können nicht schlafen,	27	Es   ist ein Wunder, [ daß unser Unterstand noch keine Verluste
3	wir   stieren vor uns [ hin		hat.
4	und   [ duseln.	28	Er   ist [ einer der wenigen tiefen Stollen, die es jetzt noch gibt.
5	Tjaden   [ bedauert,	29	¶Ein Unteroffizier   kriecht [ herein;
6	daß wir   unsere angefressenen Brotstücke für die Ratten [	30	er   hat ein Brot [ bei sich.
	vergeudet haben.	31	Drei Leuten ist es   doch geglückt, [ nachts durchzukommen und
7	Wir   hätten sie ruhig [ aufheben sollen.		etwas Proviant zu holen.
8	Jeder   würde sie jetzt [ essen.	32	Sie   [ haben erzählt,
9	Wasser   fehlt uns auch, aber [ nicht so sehr.	33	daß das Feuer   in unverminderter Stärke bis zu den
10	¶Gegen Morgen,   ...		Artillerieständen [ läge.
11	als es   noch dunkel [ ist,	34	Es   sei ein Rätsel, [ wo die drüben so viele Geschütze hernähmen.
(10)	... entsteht [ Aufregung.	35	¶Wir   [ müssen warten, warten.
12	Durch den Eingang   stürzt [ ein Schwarm flüchtender Ratten	36	Mittags   passiert [ das, womit ich schon rechnete.
13	und   jagt die Wände [ hinauf.	37	Einer der Rekruten   hat [ einen Anfall.
14	Die Taschenlampen   beleuchten [ die Verwirrung.	38	Ich   hatte ihn schon lange [ beobachtet,
15	Alle   [ schreien und fluchen	39	wie er   ruhelos die Zähne [ bewegte
16	und   [ schlagen zu.	40	und   die Fäuste [ ballte und schloß.
17	Es   ist [ der Ausbruch der Wut und der Verzweiflung vieler	41	Diese gehetzten, herausspringenden Augen   kennen wir [ zur
	Stunden,		Genüge.
18	der   sich [ entläßt.	42	In den letzten Stunden ist er   nur scheinbar stiller [ geworden.
19	Die Gesichter   sind [ verzerrt,	43	¶Jetzt steht   er [ auf,
20	die Arme   [ schlagen,	44	unauffällig   kriecht er [ durch den Raum,
21	die Tiere   [ quietschen,	45	verweilt [ einen Augenblick
22	es   fällt schwer [ aufzuhören,	46	und   rutscht dann [ dem Ausgang zu.
23	fast hätte einer   den andern [ angefallen.	47	Ich   lege mich [ herum
24	¶Der Ausbruch   hat uns [ erschöpft.	48	und   [ frage:
25	Wir   [ liegen	49	„Wo   willst du [ hin?“

Figure 6. The Im Westen nichts Neues extract annotated.

		Chain element distribution		Chain element density	
		No. elements	% of total	No. exp. elements	% of exp. elements
Theme		30	61%	42	71%
Rheme	Other	14	29%	56	25%
	N-rheme	5	10%	41	12%
	Total	19	39%	97	20%
General total		49	100%	139	35%

**Table 5.** Chain element distribution and density in the *Im Westen nichts Neues* text.

		Long-chain distribution		Proportion	
		No. long chain elements in	% of total	No. chain elements	% of chain elements
Theme		14	61%	30	47%
Rheme	Other	9	39%	14	64%
	N-rheme	0	0%	5	0%
	Total	9	39%	19	47%
General total		23	100%	49	47%

**Table 6.** Long-chain element distribution in the *Im Westen nichts Neues* text.

**Tables 5** and **6** show the proportions of presuming reference. The first half of the **Table 5** shows no significant contrast whatsoever with the French and English texts, with respect to the distribution of presuming reference into Theme and Rheme. Admittedly the proportions are closer to those of the English text. What is different is the relative absence of presuming reference in the final clause elements, the N-rhemes, as opposed to the Other part of the Rheme. This of course relates to verb final positioning in German. The second half of the first table shows that the allowance for different proportions of experiential elements in Theme and Rheme stretches makes the reference contrast between the two just as extreme as in the case of the French and English texts—in numbers the German text is now closer to the French.

The first half of **Table 6** shows the proportions of long chain elements distributed into Themes and Rhemes respectively. The long chains here are the dugout soldiers collectively, often realized as ‘wir’, and the recruit. As usual, a significant majority of long chain elements fall into the Themes, but not quite so great a majority as in the French and English texts. Unexpectedly the second half of the table shows that the proportion of reference items in Themes and Rhemes drawn from the long chains are identical. This is the one case where this index fails to confirm the importance of the long chains to the Themes.

On the whole, the German specimen text does not show significant differences in reference distribution from the French and English. Taking into account the differences in analysis proposed by the German Systemic Functional linguists would not alter this conclusion.

		Chain element distribution		Chain element density	
		No. elements	% of total	No. exp. elements	% of exp. elements
Theme		22	69%	41	54%
Rheme	Other	3	9%	59	5%
	N-rheme	7	22%	40	18%
	Total	10	31%	99	10%
General total		32	100%	140	23%

**Table 7.** Chain element distribution and density in the *Le Devoir* text.

6. ANOTHER FRENCH GENRE. One last consideration in the comparison of French and English is the difference that may be made by genre. All our specimen texts so far have been narrative. I chose an alternative by arbitrarily selecting an article containing 39 non-embedded clauses from the on-line version of Montreal's *Le Devoir* (Levesque 2008). One of the things which the method of development of this expository text shares with the previous narrative texts is a careful outline structure. For example, the very first clause, the headline *Charest ajoute cinq millions pour le recrutement de travailleurs étrangers* is a hypertheme. The first two paragraphs of the text expand on it, and concentrate on M. Charest. The next two paragraphs concentrate on funding. A sub-headline following, *Peu de résultats*, is meant to suggest a new departure on the subject of practical measures (even though the headline itself seems to anticipate only the following paragraph). The last five paragraphs concentrate specifically on just two topics, the *Ordre des ingénieurs* and the *Parti libéral du Québec*.

The role of Themes in relation to the method of development begins by being more like the *Le matou* narrative than the other texts. What is distinctive in the Themes of the first four paragraphs is the local topic, as relayed by lexis and presuming reference. In the first two it is M. Charest who occupies most of the Themes, and most of the others consist only of conjunctions anyway. In the second two paragraphs it is funding, past or present, which is featured in all of the Themes except those which consist only of conjunctions. The Themes in the first two paragraphs after the sub-headline are different and make for a complex structure. The first paragraph is introduced by a temporal conjunction Theme, *Jusqu'à maintenant*, and the two following clauses by a Theme *Par exemple*. The second paragraph is a quote from the minister which is integrated into the train of thought with topical presuming references *Cela* and *Le gouvernement*. The following paragraphs show another new strategy for signalling development through Themes. One segment is distinguished by its use of Daneš's Rheme-to-Theme chaining, where each successive and new Theme picks up its topical reference from the immediately preceding Rheme (Daneš 1974:118). Another segment is distinguished by its use of a two-Theme strategy, where two topical Themes alternate in successive clauses. The next segment bridges from the previous in its first topical Theme, then introduces the *Parti libéral du Québec* in the Rheme, which will be the prevailing topic for the rest of the clauses.

**Table 7** and **Table 8** (overleaf) represent the distribution of presuming reference. **Table 7** shows that, like the English and the German texts, about two-thirds of the presuming

		Long-chain distribution		Proportion	
		No. long chain elements in	% of total	No. chain elements	% of chain elements
Theme		7	87.5%	22	32%
Rheme	Other	0	0%	3	0%
	N-rheme	1	12.5%	7	14%
	Total	1	12.5%	10	10%
General total		8	100%	32	25%

**Table 8.** Long-chain element distribution in the Le Devoir text.

reference falls into the Themes. The second half of the table based on experiential elements alone confirms this preference, and confirms the resemblance to the same two other texts. M. Charest is the only long chain here, barely, at eight instances. **Table 8** in its first half demonstrates his almost invariable thematization. The second half of the table shows that he accounts for almost a third of the presuming reference items in Themes.

7. CONCLUSION. This foray into French, English, and even German text shows three results that should lead to further investigation. Both the qualitative and the quantitative methods of analysis demonstrated here that were worked out for English text appear to be applicable to French and German language text with little alteration. The association between clause Theme and the Method of Development in English text is also characteristic of texts in French and German. Furthermore, the preference of presuming reference for distribution into the Theme stretches of successive clauses, as a function of the Method of Development, also appears to be a characteristic of texts in all three languages.



REFERENCES

BEAUCHEMIN, YVES. 1985. *Le matou*. Montreal: Québec/Amérique.

British Component of the International Corpus of English. 2008. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/projects/ice-gb/>.

CAFFAREL, ALICE. 2006. *A systemic functional grammar of French: From grammar to discourse*. London: Continuum.

CAFFAREL, ALICE, J.R. MARTIN & C.M.I.M. MATTHIESSEN, eds. 2004. *Language typology: A functional perspective*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

CUMMINGS, MICHAEL. 2004. Towards a statistical interpretation of Systemic-functional Theme/Rheme. *LACUS forum* 30:343–54.

———. 2005. The role of Theme and Rheme in contrasting methods of organization in texts. In *The dynamics of language use: Functional and contrastive*, ed. Christopher S.

- Butler, María De Los Ángeles Gómez-González & Susana M. Doval-Suárez, 129–54. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- . 2006. Measuring lexical distributions across theme and rheme. In *LACUS forum* 32:289–99.
- . (in press). The Theme/Rheme distinction and the method of development in written French text. In *La linguistique systémique fonctionnelle et la langue française*, ed. David Banks, Janet Ormrod & Simon Eason. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- DANEŠ, FRANTIŠEK. 1974. Functional sentence perspective and the organization of the text. In *Papers on functional sentence perspective*, ed. František Daneš, 106–28. The Hague: Mouton.
- FIRBAS, JAN. 1992. *Functional sentence perspective in written and spoken communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- FRIES, PETER H. 1981/1983. On the status of Theme in English: Arguments from discourse. *Forum linguisticum* 6(1):1–38. Reprinted in *Micro and macro connexity of texts*. Papers in textlinguistics 45, ed. Janos Petőfi and Emel Sözer, 116–52. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag.
- . 1995. Themes, methods of development and texts. In *On Subject and Theme: A discourse functional perspective*, ed. Ruqaiya Hasan & Peter H. Fries, 317–59. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- . 2002. The flow of information in a written text. In *Relations and functions within and around language*, ed. Peter H. Fries, Michael Cummings, David Lockwood & William Spruiell, 117–55. London: Continuum.
- GIVON, TALMY. 1979. *On understanding grammar*. New York: Academic Press.
- . 1995. Coherence in text vs. coherence in mind. In *Coherence in spontaneous text*, ed. Morton Ann Gernsbacher & Talmy Givon, 59–115. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- HALLIDAY, M.A.K. 1967. Notes on transitivity and theme in English, Part 2. *Journal of linguistics* 3:199–244.
- . 1984. On the ineffability of grammatical categories. In *LACUS forum* 10:3–18.
- HALLIDAY, M.A.K. & C.M.I.M. Matthiessen. 2004. *An introduction to functional grammar*, 3rd ed. London: Arnold.
- LÉVESQUE, KATHLEEN. 2008. Charest ajoute cinq millions pour le recrutement de travailleurs étrangers. *Le Devoir*, February 9, <http://www.ledevoir.com/2008/02/09/175468.html>.
- MARTIN, JAMES R. 1992. *English text: System and structure*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- . 2004. Metafunctional profile of the grammar of Tagalog. In Caffarel, Martin & Matthiessen, 255–304.
- REMARQUE, ERICH MARIA. 1963. *Im Westen nichts Neues*. Frankfurt: Ullstein Verlag.
- STEINER, ERICH & ELKE TEICH. 2004. Metafunctional profile of the grammar of German. In Caffarel, Martin & Matthiessen, 139–184.
- WAUGH, EVELYN. 1983. *Brideshead revisited*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.





## GENDER, TRANSITIVITY, AND PERSON IN ALGONKIAN AND INUKTITUT

JOHN HEWSON  
*Memorial University of Newfoundland*

OF THE THREE CATEGORIES OF GENDER, TRANSITIVITY, AND PERSON, the last of these (person) appears to be a true universal of human languages. I have never yet observed a human language which did not have some kind of reference to what we, in our grammatical tradition, call first, second, and third person, nor have I ever heard any report from any other linguist of the existence of any language which lacked the category of grammatical person. That is a fact which reveals something about the nature of language itself. Normally, as in Indo-European languages, there is a hierarchy which runs from the first person, the speaker speaking about self, through the second person, the person spoken to about self, to the third person, simply the person spoken about, as presented in (1), definitions taken from Gustave Guillaume (1987) because they clearly distinguish the speech act participants (SAP) from the third person.

(1) Indo-European Person Hierarchy:

First Person (SAP)	=	Speaker speaking about self
Second Person (SAP)	=	Person spoken to about self
Third Person	=	Person spoken about

But that hierarchical *order* (1, 2, 3) is by no means a linguistic universal: those three persons, yes, but in that order, no. In Algonkian languages, for example, what we call the second person is marked grammatically as the primary element of the hierarchy, to which what we call the first person is subordinate. And the Algonkian third person, as well as showing a gender distinction of animate versus inanimate also has a person distinction of proximate versus obviative. The proximate is the primary or focus third person, and the obviative is the secondary or peripheral third person, with a grammar all of its own. What we normally call the plural forms are even more complex, with first person plural inclusive (*you and me*) and exclusive (*me and my buddy, but not you*), as well as proximate and obviative third persons, linguistic variations of the basic, universal three personal categories.

Gender and transitivity, which I am also going to talk about, are frequently involved in the grammar of person, but are not linguistic universals. They are found in Indo-European languages apparently without exception, but not necessarily elsewhere: there are no third person distinctions of gender in Inuktitut, for example, and it is quite common to hear even well-educated speakers of Algonkian languages refer to men as *she* and women as *he* when speaking English, since for them, in their languages, the grammatical contrast of masculine and feminine does not exist (although the contrast of animate versus inanimate,

apparently non-existent in Inuktitut, is of prime importance in Algonkian). As for transitivity, such facts as the lack of a passive in Hittite have led to the suspicion that Proto Indo-European may have been an active language, where the diathesis of the verb was completed not with a direct object, but with adverbial phrases using all of the oblique cases of the noun. In Modern Icelandic, which is the most conservative of the modern languages in this regard, there are well over 200 verbs where the verbal diathesis is completed by an oblique, sometimes genitive, sometimes dative, sometimes accusative, where modern English has simply a direct object. In Old English many of those same verbs governed oblique cases, just as they do in Modern Icelandic, so that we can see in the history of English the consummation of the development of the fully transitive diathesis of the verb.

First of all I want to look at the interrelationship of the grammar of possession and the grammar of transitivity which is found in so many languages of the world (Allen 1964, Seiler 1983b, Ulving 1987:40), where there is a common morphology for the pronominal elements that mark (a) nominal *possession* and (b) the verbal *subject* of intransitive verbs, as in (2). The data is from Ojibway, an Algonkian language spoken in the southern parts of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, as well as across the border in the northern U.S. The prefixed pronominal elements *ni-*, *ki-*, *o-*, are used with nouns to indicate possession, and with verbs to indicate the subject of intransitive verbs and also transitive verbs with inanimate goal (TI verbs): the verb *niwa:panta:n* means 'I see it', and *ninikk* means 'my arm'. Grammatical possession in Algonkian languages is always hierarchical, and the hierarchical relationships are made explicit in the right hand column,

(2) Ojibway Person Markers for Subject and Possessor

		'SEE IT'	'ARM'	(PERSONS)
<i>ni-</i>	1st sing.	<i>niwa:panta:n</i>	<i>ni-nikk</i>	1 > 3 <sub>INAN</sub>
<i>ki-</i>	2nd sing.	<i>kiwa:panta:n</i>	<i>ki-nikk</i>	2 > 3 <sub>INAN</sub>
<i>o-</i>	3rd sing.	<i>owa:panta:n</i>	<i>o-nikk</i>	3 <sub>AN</sub> > 3 <sub>INAN</sub>

But, whereas the word for 'arm' in Ojibway is inanimate, a further element is called into play when the possessed noun is animate, as in (3): *ninaw*, *kinaw*, *onawan* 'my, thy, his/her cheek', again with an exact parallel in the paradigms of the transitive verb: *niwa:pama:*, *kiwa:pama:*, *owa:pama:n*, '1st, 2nd, 3rd sees (something animate)', where the suffixed (a)*n* in both cases marks the obviative singular, again with a hierarchical analysis in the right-most column, where <sub>AN</sub>=animate, <sub>INAN</sub>=inanimate, <sub>PR</sub>=proximate, <sub>OBV</sub>=obviative), the obviative marker for both verbal and nominal forms being /-n/ in Ojibway.

(3) Ojibway Person Markers with Animate Goal or Animate Possessee

		'SEE S.T. ANIMATE'	'CHEEK'	(PERSONS)
<i>ni-</i>	1st sing.	<i>niwa:pama:</i>	<i>ni-naw</i>	1 > 3 <sub>AN</sub>
<i>ki-</i>	2nd sing.	<i>kiwa:pama:</i>	<i>ki-naw</i>	2 > 3 <sub>AN</sub>
<i>o-</i>	3rd sing.	<i>owa:pama:n</i>	<i>o-naw-an</i>	3 <sub>PR</sub> > 3 <sub>OBV</sub>



In these paradigms we can see elements of three Algonkian grammatical hierarchies. The possessor is seen as the determining element in the relationship of possession, and is therefore required to be of a higher grammatical rank than the possessee. In Algonkian person hierarchies first and second person rank higher than third; it can also be seen that animate ranks higher than inanimate, and that proximate ranks higher than obviative. The proximate/obviative distinction only comes into play in Ojibway when both actors are otherwise of an equal status (namely third person animate): its principal purpose appears to be the 'backgrounding' (Seiler 1983a:24) of the possessee, thereby foregrounding or focussing the determining role of the possessor.

The notion of obviative, by itself, is secondary or derived: there can be no obviative unless there is first a proximate, just as in baseball freedom to advance to second base is contingent on touching first base, which thereby becomes a determining or controlling factor of the secondary element. Proximate, in short, determines obviative: proximate establishes a new (third person) viewpoint or focus, to which all other third persons are secondary, or notionally subordinate.

The animate/inanimate hierarchy has similar values. Universally in languages, animates are appropriate for agentive active roles, such as agent of a transitive verb, in which the agent controls or determines the action, whereas inanimates are appropriate for inactive roles such as patient. If A hits B, for example, A is the controlling and determining factor, who often has free choice, whereas B has little control or choice—he is hit whether he likes it or not. It is noteworthy that animates in languages such as Spanish (phenomenon of *leísmo*), Gascon, Rumanian, and elsewhere in the world, require special prepositional or other marking to play the role of patient, Spanish *leísmo* is a mark of the iconic insuitability of an animate or active element to play the role of patient.

The person hierarchy, wherein first and second outrank third, is based on the following factors: (a) first and second persons are always animate, and almost exclusively human, since only humans are normally capable of speaking, and of listening and understanding (roles that fall to first and second person by definition), whereas third persons can be either animate or inanimate; (b) the SAP (Speech Act Participants) establish a *viewpoint* (DeLancey 1981) for the discourse which determines directionality (e.g., come/go) and focus. There is, in fact, a natural hierarchy, as noted by Guillaume (1987:100), in the very act of language: the speaker is the fully active person, creating discourse and causing it to vibrate on the airwaves, the hearer is in a mediopassive position, passive in regard to receiving the message, but active in interpreting and understanding it. The third person, by contrast, is inactive, not being required to speak or listen. In this regard the hierarchy of person may be seen to be equally as iconic as those of animacy and obviation.

These same factors are also at play in the paradigm of possession: first and second persons, for example, may possess third person elements, but third person elements cannot be possessors of elements that are first and second person: we can have *my dog*, *your dog*, but we cannot have *\*dog's me* or *\*dog's you*. In the paradigms of possession in Algonkian languages, therefore, we can see the person hierarchies operating in every form: SAP>3 is an irreversible relation of determination, and when there is a third person possessor, the relationship must always be interpreted as either animate>inanimate (dominance of agentivity) or proximate>obviative (dominance of viewpoint).

We turn now to Direct and Inverse Forms. It would appear that the majority of languages that have person hierarchies or grammatical directionality (i.e., direct and inverse forms) follow the natural hierarchy noted above and made explicit by Seiler (1983a:46), as in (4):

- (4) 1st > 2nd > 3rd human > 3rd animate > 3rd inanimate

An alternative is to treat the two SAPs as equal elements. The Algonkian family, in fact, without exception, presents the hierarchy in (5).

- (5) 2nd > 1st > 3rd an proximate > 3rd animate obviative > 3rd inanimate

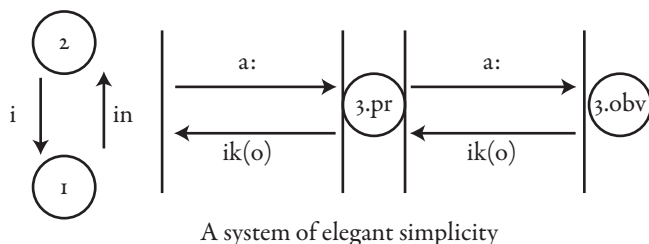
where there is the prominence given to second person over first. The possible cultural overtones of this difference may be of interest to anthropologists, and indeed Speck (1935) has discussed at length the fact that among the tribes of Northern Quebec and Labrador it is felt that one's *mista:pe:w* (literally 'great man' or 'spirit') may not be as powerful as that of one's interlocutor, to whom one must, as a consequence, always give deference.

Whatever the case, the Algonkian TA verb (transitive with animate goal) has paradigms which show three sets of direct and inverse forms, as in the TA paradigms from Ojibway in (6), where the second set represents the plural or complex persons, and the third set represents the interplay between first and second persons. In these paradigms 3 = 3rd proximate and 3' = 3rd obviative, 1p = 1st plural exclusive *s/he and I*, 12 = 1st plural inclusive *you and I*. The direct forms are on the left, the inverse forms on the right, so that *niwa:pama:* means 'I see him' whereas *niwa:pamik* means 'He sees me', and in the second row *kiwa:pama:* means 'You see him', and *kiwa:pamik* means 'He sees you'. In the third line *owa:pama:* means 'proximate sees obviative', and *owa:pamiko:n* means 'obviative sees proximate'. In both forms the initial *o-* marks the proximate, and again in both forms the final *-n* marks the obviative.

The forms in the right hand column are equally active and transitive as the forms on the left, the only difference being that the normal hierarchies of person and viewpoint operate inversely in the forms in the right hand column.

(6) Ojibway Transitive Animate (TA) Verbal Paradigms

	DIRECT		INVERSE
1 > 3	<i>niwa:pama:</i>	1 < 3	<i>niwa:pamik</i>
2 > 3	<i>kiwa:pama:</i>	2 < 3	<i>kiwa:pamik</i>
3 > 3'	<i>owa:pama:n</i>	3 < 3'	<i>owa:pamiko:n</i>
1p > 3	<i>niwa:pama:na:n</i>	1p < 3	<i>niwa:pamikona:n</i>
12 > 3	<i>kiwa:pama:na:n</i>	12 < 3	<i>kiwa:pamikona:n</i>
2p > 3	<i>kiwa:pama:wa:</i>	2p < 3	<i>kiwa:pamikowa:</i>
3p > 3'	<i>owa:pama:wa:n</i>	3p < 3'	<i>owa:pamikowa:n</i>
2 > 1	<i>kiwa:pami</i>	2 < 1	<i>kiwa:pamin</i>



**Figure 1.** Schematic View of Ojibway TA Markers (based on Hockett 1966).

$2p > 1$	<i>kiwa:pamim</i>	$2p < 1$	<i>kiwa:paminim</i>
$2(p) > 1p$	<i>kiwa:paminimin</i>	$2(p) < 1p$	<i>kiwa:paminiminim</i>

The last line is to be interpreted as follows:  $2(p) > 1p$  = second person (sg. or pl.) acting on first plural: *kiwa:paminimin* 'you (sg. or pl.) see us';  $2(p) < 1p$  = first plural acting on second (sg. or pl.): *kiwa:paminiminim* 'we see you (sg. or pl.)'. All the inverse forms are to be interpreted according to this pattern. Note that in the inclusive form the *ki* prefix of second person is used, indicating the hierarchical ranking of second person over first, and the *ki* prefix is also found throughout the paradigm of the you-me and I-you ( $2 > 1$  and  $2 < 1$ ) forms, where second person takes hierarchical precedence over first.

In the above paradigm the following direct and inverse markers may be presented schematically as in **Figure 1**. The markers in **Figure 1** represent the following functions: (i) *a:* = direct action on subordinate third person; (ii) *ik(o)* = inverse action of subordinate third person on others; (iii) *i* = direct action of second person on first; *in* = inverse action of first person on second. (The above figure may profitably be compared to that in Hockett (1966), where the status of direct and inverse forms is discussed at length.)

We turn now to the question of the parallelism of transitivity and possession in Inuktitut. Since Inuktitut has dual number as well as singular and plural, the paradigms of the transitive verb, when laid out to fill all possible permutations of actor, are very complex. Such a paradigm may be seen in the three pages presenting the 63 possible forms of the indicative in Smith (1977:613): syncretism is ignored in Smith's presentation, the appropriate form being given for every possible combination of actors. The same 63 forms are compressed onto one page in Lowe's grammars of the dialects of the Beaufort Sea region (e.g., 1985a:117, 1985b:121, 1985c:130).

An important and recurrent pattern emerges from these Inuktitut transitive paradigms: third person proximate is regularly unmarked. This means that the argument that is italicised in (7) has no marker in the Inuktitut forms, and that this is an essential fact that for understanding what happens in the rest of the paradigm. The rest of the paradigm cannot be properly understood if this fact is not taken into account.

(7) Inuktitut Transitive Forms

taku-va-ga I see *him*  
 taku-va-t You see *him*  
 taku-va-a *He* sees him

In these forms *-va* marks the verb as transitive, and *-ga* and *-t* mark first and second person transitive agents respectively; the third person patient is not marked in these forms. In other words in these two forms, *takuvaga*, *takuvat*, the goal of the transitive verb is completely unmarked. In the remaining form, however, the *-a* has to be interpreted, as we shall see, as the goal of the transitive verb; in this form it is the third person agent that is unmarked.

We have already seen that this is precisely the pattern followed in the Algonkian transitive animate paradigms where the third person proximate makes the same shift from the role of patient with SAP subjects to agent in 3 > 3 forms (pr = proximate; U = unmarked) as shown in (8):

(8) Person Relationships in Algonkian and Inuktitut Transitive Paradigms

ALGONKIAN			INUKTITUT		
1	>	3pr	1	>	3prU
2	>	3pr	2	>	3prU
3pr	>	3obv	3prU	>	3obv

In the transitive paradigms of Inuktitut, as we have seen, the stem is marked for transitivity, but only the agent is marked in inflections of the 1>3 and 2>3 forms, whereas in the 3pr>3obv forms only the patient is marked, as the following forms in (9) from Lowe (1985b:121) clearly show.

(9) Inuktitut Obviative Forms

<i>utaqqigaa</i>	'he waits for him'	<i>illu</i>	'house'
<i>utaqqigai</i>	'he waits for them'		
<i>utaqqigaat</i>	'they wait for him'	<i>illu-t</i>	'house-s'
<i>utaqqigait</i>	'they wait for them'		

In this dialect *ga* is the transitive marker, *a* marks obviative singular, *i* marks obviative plural, and *t* marks proximate plural, proximate singular being unmarked. I shall call this recurrent pattern the Ushift (U = un-marked), and it will be found to apply not only to transitives, but also to possessives, and to the marking of singular and plural, since the proximate plural marker *t* (as in *illut* 'houses') is not used for the obviative.

The syncretism that we have already mentioned as being a feature of the transitive paradigms is revealing. For 1<sub>DUAL</sub>>3U and 2<sub>DUAL</sub>>3U forms there is levelling of number in the patient, whereas in 3U>3 forms there is levelling of number in the agent, as the following forms in (10) from Smith's Labrador Inuttut data (1977:62) clearly show (3 = prox; 3' = obv):

(10) Syncretism of Singular, Dual, and Plural Forms of Unmarked Third Person in Inuktitut

1d	>	3/3d/3p	<i>takuvavuk</i>	'we two see him/them both/them all'
2d	>	3/3d/3p	<i>takuvatik</i>	'you two see him/them both/them all'
3/3d/3p	>	3'	<i>takuvauk</i>	'he/they both/they all see him'
3/3d/3p	>	3'd	<i>takuvaagik</i>	'he/they both/they all see them both'
3/3d/3p	>	3'p	<i>takuvait</i>	'he/they both/they all see them all'

(Cf. *taku-va-tik* 'you two see him/them/all' and *taku-vu-tik* 'you both see' where *-vu-* = intransitive).

These patterns of levelling (1/2 > 3U vs. 3U > 3', where 3U is unmarked for number) persist throughout the paradigm, but with less consistency than in the examples given, showing that third person typically behaves differently from first and second, indicating the different status of third person from first and second. The unmarked status of 3U, for example, shows very clearly in *takuvatik*, which only differs from *takuvutik* 'you both see (intransitive)' in the fact that *va* is the verbal marker of transitivity whereas *vu* is the marker of intransitivity. In both forms there is only one person marker: the *tik* that marks second person dual.

Ulving (1987:401) also points out that the possessive markers for third person differ significantly from those for first and second, and reports the confusion that this difference has caused among analysts of the language. His Greenlandic data, using the noun *illu(t)* 'house(s)', shows that whereas the suffixes mark the possessor in first and second person forms, the suffixes *a* and *i* mark the possessee, 'while the third singular possessor is marked by zero' (1987:41):

(11) Proximate and Obviative Possessive Forms in Inuktitut

1	>	3U	<i>illuga</i> (<*ka)	1	>	3UP	<i>illukka</i> (<*illutka)
2	>	3U	<i>illut</i>	2	>	3UP	<i>illutit</i>
3U	>	3'	<i>illua</i>	3U	>	3'p	<i>illui</i>
3UP	>	3'	<i>illuat</i>	3UP	>	3'p	<i>illui(t)</i>

Here again we can observe the effect of the U-shift. In the form *illua* 'his house', *a* marks the noun as obviative singular. In *illui* 'his houses', *i* marks the noun as obviative plural. In both cases the proximate possessor is unmarked, and need not be marked, since one can only have an obviative where there is already a proximate. In the forms *illuat* and *illuit* the final *t* marks the proximate possessor as plural, whereas in *illukka* (<\*tka) and *illutit* it marks the proximate possessee as plural. This *t* is, in fact, the regular proximate plural marker that is found on *illut* 'houses' when the noun itself is proximate, not obviative. The shifting role of *-t* in this paradigm is entirely dependent on the U-shift; it regularly pluralizes the unmarked proximate, whether this latter be possessor or possessee.

In conclusion we may note that the problem of person is a true linguistic universal since, as Guillaume comments, "It is impossible to conceive of language without a certain solution to the problem of person, seeing that language requires the confrontation of an active, speaking person and a listener, active also by dint of his listening" (1987:187, trans. by author). Solutions to the problem vary, but it is not surprising to find that third person, an element transcendent or exterior to the phatic relationship of first and second, is frequently treated quite differently from these latter persons. It is also not surprising, given the necessarily always active role of first and second, to find them ranked in an iconically-based hierarchy above third person. And the use of inverse forms, which require the representation to run counter to these established hierarchies, can likewise be seen as a development

to be expected, a necessary result once such highly iconic systems of grammatical person have been established. We also find in languages of the Tibeto-Burman family (one of the rare other families that has direct and inverse forms) an example of the “split ergative type with ergative syntax in transitive sentences with a third person subject and accusative syntax with first or second person subjects” (Ebert 1987:475), a situation that emphasizes the distinctive role of speech act participants.

There is, of course, no one system of personal pronouns that is universal. What is universal, however, as Guillaume has indicated (1987:188), is the distinction between what is immanent to the linguistic system, and what transcends it: third person is always immanent to the system; first and second, however, because they are the two poles between which the act of language takes place, are established outside the system, and change with every change of speaker. They are necessarily deictic elements, in a way that third person is not. It is not surprising that in child language the child initially uses its own name (i.e., third person) for self reference; use of first and second person pronouns is a later development (Jones 1970:10).

In Inuktitut, the identity of morphological markers of possession in the noun and of agents of the transitive verb has led linguists (a) to view transitivity as a subcategory of possession (Thalbitzer 1911, Hammerich 1970, Schmitt 1976, Johns 1987), or (b) to view possession as a subcategory of transitivity (Mey 1970, Rischel 1971, Kalmár 1979). Rather than propose that one function determines another, however, it is more appropriate, in sound linguistic method, to derive them both from a common underlying source than to derive each from the other. We do not, in historical linguistics, derive daughter language A from daughter language B; we derive both A and B from a prehistoric source that needs to be reconstructed. As Seiler has pointed out (1983a) what we call possession is in fact a simple determining relationship that covers relations as different as *my book* (Seiler’s “establishing relationship”), *my mother* (Seiler’s “inherent relationship”: every speaker has a mother), *my song* (‘the song they always sing for me’), and so on. Clearly the role of controller of a transitive verb and of possessor of a noun are similarly broad determining relationships, so that it is profitable for many languages to exploit a common morphology for both functions. Ulving (1987), in his final paragraph, expresses a similar point of view, and points out that he has argued “that the fundamental function of this form [i.e., possessive] is to express a relationship of some kind.”

Finally we should note the importance of unmarked categories such as third proximate in Inuktitut. The fact that this unmarked element is the patient of the transitive verb in 1>3 and 2>3 forms, but naturally and expectedly shifts to being the agent in 3>3’ forms, just as it does in Algonkian languages, lies behind many of the oddities in the transitive paradigms of Inuktitut. Once one understands the different roles played by this unmarked element, and the significance of the pattern of U-shift, much of the transitive morphology of Inuktitut becomes quite transparent.

From the foregoing, we may draw the following methodological and theoretical conclusions. The first and most important methodological conclusion is the priority of meaning. If you believe that all grammar is syntax, and all syntax is meaningless, you cannot do the kind of linguistics I have just been demonstrating. In fact, if you believe that the

morphosyntax is more important than what it marks you have put the cart before the horse. The whole purpose of language is the representation and conveying of meaning.

The second methodological conclusion is the necessity of monosemy: the insistence that the same morphological element, in entirely different functions, nevertheless represents a single underlying meaning. There may be alloemes, variant surface meanings, but all can ultimately be traced to the same underlying grammatical meaning. The Inuktitut [-t] that marks the proximate plural in *illut* 'houses', is the same [-t] that marks the subject plural in *utaaqigaat* 'they wait for him'. And perhaps even more curiously, the [-t] that marks houses as plural in *illutit* 'your houses', is the same [-t] that marks the owners of the houses in *illuat* 'their houses'. In this last form it is the obviative plural [-a] of *illuat* that pluralizes *house* and the following [-t] that pluralizes the owners of the houses. These are exemplifications of the grammar of the U-shift, which operates in identical fashion in the grammar of the transitive verb and in the grammar of personal possession.

Finally, there is the important element of system which is so often neglected. The paradigm of the transitive animate verb in Ojibwa represents a closed system of meanings, so that the direct and inverse markers can be laid out in schematic form as in (7) above. The systemic nature of languages has two advantages: (i) it makes languages easier to learn, so that they can be learnt by very small children. It is much easier to learn a set of items that has inner coherence, than a list of random and atomistic elements. And (ii) it gives languages stability through time: a closed system cannot be altered, except by destroying the whole system, which does happen, and normally results in a major typological shift. If it were not for the stability imposed by system, there would be nothing to prevent massive language change in every generation.

Systems, as can be seen in the data we have just examined, are not always easy to analyse. But since all languages face the same questions and problems of representing experience, it is always interesting to turn to a new set of data, and find that a solution that has already been perceived in one set of languages is also relevant, in some new and curious way, to the new data under examination. In the case we have examined, the marked contrasts of proximate and obviative found in Algonkian languages lead to an understanding of a similar contrast that is much less clearly marked in Inuktitut.



## REFERENCES

- ALLEN, W. SIDNEY. 1964. Transitivity and possession. *Language* 40:337-43.  
 DELANCEY, SCOTT. 1981. An interpretation of split ergativity and related patterns. *Language* 57:626-57.  
 EBERT, KAREN H. 1987. Grammatical marking of speech act participants in Tibeto-Burman. *Journal of pragmatics* 11:473-82.



- GUILLAUME, GUSTAVE. 1987. *Leçons de linguistique. 8. Grammaire particulière du français et grammaire générale*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval; Lille: Presses Universitaires.
- HAMMERICH, L.L. 1970. *The Eskimo language*. Fridtjof Nansen Minneforelesninger [Fridtjof Nansen Memorial Lecture] No. 6, 1969. Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.
- HOCKETT, CHARLES F. 1966. What Algonquian is really like. *International journal of applied linguistics* 32:59–73.
- JOHNS, ALANA. 1987. Interreferential predication in Eskimo. In *Proceedings of the 17th Annual Meeting of the North East Linguistic Society*, ed. J. McDonough & B. Plunkett, 343–60. Amherst MA: Graduate Linguistic Students' Association, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- JONES, ROBERT M. 1970. *System in child language*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- KALMÁR, IVAN. 1979. *Case and context in Inuktitut (Eskimo)*. Canadian Ethnology Service paper 49. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.
- LOWE, RONALD. 1985a. *Kangiryuarmit Uqaubingita Ilihautdjutihangit. Basic Kangiryuarmit Eskimo grammar*. Inuvik: Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement.
- . 1985b. *Uummarmiut Uqalungiba Ilihaurrutikrangit. Basic Uummarmiut Eskimo grammar*. Inuvik: Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement.
- . 1985c. *Siglit Inuvialuit Uqausiita Ilsarviksait. Basic Siglit Inuvialuit Eskimo grammar*. Inuvik: Committee for Original Peoples Entitlement.
- MEY, JACOB. 1970. Possessive and transitive in Eskimo. *Journal of linguistics* 6:47–56.
- RISCHEL, JORGEN. 1971. Some characteristics of noun phrases in West Greenlandic. *Acta linguistica hafnensia* 13:213–45.
- SCHMITT, ALFRED. 1976. Der nominale Character des sogennanten Verbums der Eskimo-Sprache. *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 73:27–45.
- SEILER, HANSJAKOB. 1983a. *Possession as an operational dimension of language*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.
- SEILER, HANSJAKOB. 1983b. Possessivity, subject and object. *Studies in language* 7:89–117.
- SMITH, LAWRENCE R. 1977. *Some grammatical aspects of Labrador Inuttut (Eskimo)*. Mercury Series 37. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.
- SPECK, FRANK G. 1935. *Naskapi*. Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- THALBITZER, WILLIAM. 1911. Eskimo: An illustrative sketch. *Bulletin of the Bureau of American Ethnology* 40(1):965–1069.
- ULVING, TOR. 1987. The Eskimo suffixes *a* and *i*: Markers of what? *International journal of applied linguistics* 53:39–60.
- VAXTIN, N.B. 1979. Nominal and verbal ergativity in Asiatic Eskimo: Splits in the person and mood paradigms. In *Ergativity*, ed. Franz Plank, 279–305. London: Academic Press.





# LANGUAGE PRACTICES IN LOUISIANA: THE SWITCH FROM WRITTEN FRENCH TO WRITTEN ENGLISH WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

SYLVIE DUBOIS & EMILIE LEUMAS  
*Louisiana State University*

OVER THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS we have studied intergenerational changes and social practices in French- and English-speaking communities in South Louisiana. We have often experienced an academic frustration over the lack of empirical data associated with the early stages of language change in Louisiana. Surprisingly, the research project reported here results from one recent catastrophic event: Hurricane Katrina, which flooded New Orleans at the end of August 2005. Following the devastation in New Orleans, the religious and clerical document collections of the Archdiocese of New Orleans were temporarily relocated to the Diocese of Baton Rouge. With the help of diocesan archivists, we located and surveyed this untapped collection of business-oriented records, sacramental registers, and personal letters written from 1803 to 1859 by the laity and local people of Louisiana parishes to New Orleans bishops and priests. In particular, access to the antebellum correspondence (personal letters), one of the largest holdings of its kind in North America, allowed us to collect more than 9000 letters written in French and in English. These extensive, well-maintained, and searchable archive collections of the Louisiana Catholic Church have proved to have uncommon linguistic value if carefully used in conjunction with other data.

1. INTRODUCTION. Following a brief description of the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Louisiana, we will explain why the Archdiocese of New Orleans, as the administrative base for the entire Louisiana territory, can be defined as an institutional network of communities of practice. Then we will summarize the results of our first case study: the switch from French to English using data from the sacramental registers of more than 173 Catholic churches in South Louisiana, starting in 1844 (the earliest switch) and ending in 1954 (the last switch). Examining language change in the sacramental registers is not without its inherent problems, of course, as even a cursory look at them makes evident. There is not always a clear and easily-explicable language break in the registers; there is also the problem of abrupt language changes at the beginning of new pre-printed registers that appeared in some Louisiana churches at the turn of the twentieth century. While there are language changes in the registers that can be attributed to the arrival of a new English-speaking priest, many others are initiated by new or long-time established French priests. Sometimes priests decide to switch from French to English at the beginning of a new year or when they start a new register. Many times there are simply no clues emanating from the registers to explain this change of practice.

Because of these silences in a series of records in which commentary is sparse, it became clear in our research that the Louisiana Catholic Church hierarchical structure of author-

ity, its social constraints, and the language attitudes of its membership must be taken into account if we wanted to elucidate not only the speed but the source of the language change. To do so, we turned to additional archival collections, which allowed us to flesh out these influential constraints and attitudes only implied in the registers. We will examine data collected from the Louisiana Catholic Church archival material: the archdiocesan administration business records and its antebellum correspondence, as well as the church parish records and reports about priests and parishioner membership.

Our hypothesis is that the language used in the sacramental registers was a reflection not only of its status in Louisiana parishes but also of the church's different levels of perception of its utility in the local communities. Moreover, the pattern of language switching displayed by many church records helps us to understand better the spatial diffusion of language practices within the Louisiana Catholic Church. Accordingly, its archival materials can shed light on the extent of distinct language practices over time in Louisiana.

2. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN LOUISIANA. During the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the Roman Catholic Church stood as the last vestige of French cultural dominance and the last prestigious stronghold for the written French language in Louisiana. Established in 1793, and originally known as the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas, the Archdiocese of New Orleans was a joint creation of the King of Spain and the Pope. The Louisiana Catholic Church consisted of a multi-ethnic population of faithful, clergy, and religious, who preserved and nurtured the faith by establishing church parishes, schools, orphanages, hospitals, and other necessary institutions. From 1809 to 1860, the demographic profile of the Louisiana population changed dramatically. More than 10,000 French-speaking refugees from Santo Domingo via Cuba settled in Louisiana. Immigrants from Germany and Ireland soon outnumbered those from France. Although the arrival of Protestants, who settled mainly in the northern part of Louisiana, created a divide within the state, south Louisiana remained a predominantly Catholic territory.

As Dolan (1973:526) observes, such ethnic diversity led the Catholic Church in Louisiana, as well as elsewhere in North America, to adopt "the concept of national parish, or a congregation organized principally along the lines of language rather than territorial boundaries." From 1835 to 1860, more than 60 new church parishes were established, 20 of which were in the city of New Orleans. By contrast, the bishops and clergy of the Archdiocese of New Orleans remained predominately French. With the exception of the first bishop, who ministered during the Spanish colonial period, all bishops and archbishops were French-born until the appointment of Dutch-born Archbishop Francis Janssens in 1888. The geographical boundaries of the Archdiocese of New Orleans between 1853 and 1918 represented 35 civil parishes (counties) in South Louisiana. In 1900, the Archdiocese reported a population of 325,000 Catholics (roughly 25% of the Louisiana population), 161 churches, and 211 priests serving in South Louisiana. Today, the area is divided among five dioceses including the Dioceses of Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Houma-Thibodaux, Lake Charles, and the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

3. THE LOUISIANA CATHOLIC CHURCH COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE. According to Dulles (1978:39), the Roman Catholic Church views itself as a perfect society “that is subordinate to no other and lacks nothing required for its own institutional completeness.” Neither a democracy, nor a representative society, the Catholic Church is rooted in a hierarchical concept of authority. To perform its functions—that is, teaching, sanctifying, and governing—the Catholic Church has prescribed forms of worship, recognized ministers, responsible officers, and properly approved procedures for membership. A traditional view of the Louisiana Catholic Church would look like an authoritative pyramidal structure with, at the top, the archdiocesan administration led by an Archbishop—the liaison between the “Louisiana Province” and Rome—who might be compared to a President and CEO of a corporation. The archdiocesan administration controls and entrusts ecclesiastical functions to the priests who exercise supervision over and counsel the faithful membership.

This structural representation is problematic because it entails a total centralization of powers, a unity in decisions, and a uniform application of rules (including linguistic rules), when in fact the linguistic evolution that took place within this institution—as we will show—did not progress in this way. What other form of decision structure could better explain the sources and the diffusion of language change within the Louisiana Catholic Church?

To understand the complex nexus of interrelated constraints that governs language change, we have chosen a different approach. We describe the Louisiana Catholic Church as a network of communities of practice, a relatively new concept in the field of sociolinguistics advocated by scholars such as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), Wenger (1998), and Meyerhoff (2002). In our opinion, the structural organization of the Louisiana Catholic Church epitomizes the concept of communities of practice as “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992:464). Their endeavor as an institution is spreading and maintaining the Catholic faith and its teaching among the local people.

The nucleus of Louisiana Catholic Church in the nineteenth century was the archdiocesan administration with its Archiepiscopal Council. This community of practice was comprised of high-ranking clergymen (known as the Curia) and local priests who participated in its daily administration<sup>1</sup>. Surrounding the archdiocesan administration was a constellation of different communities of practice represented by church parishes (**Figure 1**, overleaf). They were served by appointed “secular” priests (also called “diocesan” priests) and “religious” priests, who belonged to an order (such as the Jesuits, Dominicans, Josephites, etc.) under the authority of the Archbishop or Bishop (Official Catholic Directory 2004). The faithful, or parishioners, were important members of these communities. While some participated in the parish administrative activities (council, property management, schools, etc), the social participation of most members was uncovered through written documents

<sup>1</sup> The Archbishop represents the Louisiana Catholic Church but has no jurisdiction over the dioceses. The Bishops act as the Louisiana Catholic Church executive officers and each presides over a diocese. They are surrounded by core members of their upper administration.



their members) and between them (who works with whom, and against whom) ultimately orchestrate the practice of the faithful. What we want to discover is how, through mutual engagement, these communities of practice negotiated both explicitly and implicitly a language shift from French to English.

4. LANGUAGE CHANGE WITHIN THE CHURCH PARISHES. The archival material that we selected for our first case study is the sacramental registers, which record the baptisms, the marriages, and the burials of individual practitioners of the church parish. These important moments in the Catholic faith are catalogued in the form of separate textual entries rather than simply as lists of names. Each entry is usually handwritten and signed by the priest and the witnesses to the event. Depending on the style and handwriting of the priest, one register volume may cover ten years of local history, while another may cover 50 years<sup>2</sup>.

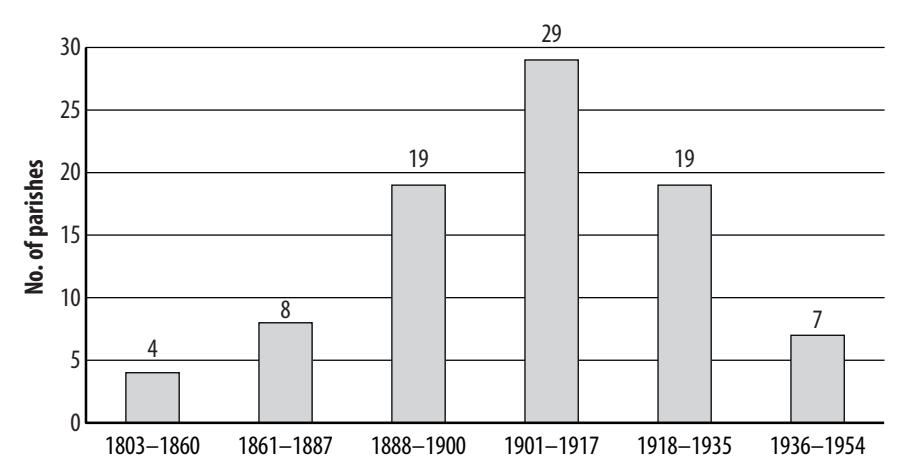
**Table 1** (overleaf) shows the mean of language switch over time in registers according to the diocese and the parish. It makes clear that most of the language changes in registers happened at the turn of the twentieth century. Churches, which belong today to the Archdiocese of New Orleans (or are closely located around New Orleans), switched on average a decade earlier (1891) than the ones from the Diocese of Baton Rouge (1906). Churches in the diocese of Lafayette maintained French records until 1917 and the Diocese of Houma/Thibodaux switched in 1916, approximately twenty-six years after New Orleans. **Figure 2** (overleaf) is a histogram that displays language shift during that time span. Several parishes changed their language practice at the end of the nineteenth century and at the turn of the twentieth; however, the majority shifted between 1900 and 1930. In fact, 46% of churches in the Archdiocese switched between 1880 and 1920. Most southern Louisiana parishes, which switched after the 1920s, are located in the West (Iberia and St. Martin) and in the South (Lafourche and St. James).

Perhaps the most important observation to be made here is that the average date of switch in Louisiana (1906) happened much later than would be expected. By and large, scholars who described the nineteenth-century language situation in Louisiana have described the shift to English as a very sudden event at the end of the Civil War, like the abolition of slavery. It has often been claimed or implied that French-speaking people stopped writing French and switched to English almost overnight. The evidence here suggests something otherwise. No one will deny that important social changes in the wake of the Civil War conditioned the language choices local priests made. Nevertheless, even if we regard Reconstruction as the catalyst to English monolingualism, the switch to English

<sup>2</sup> Since we were looking for churches with a French-to-English switch in the registers, we eliminated from our initial analysis two kinds of churches. First, no Catholic church established after 1900 has registers written in French with the exception of four churches: two in Lafourche Parish, one in St. Landry, and one in St. Mary. We also removed from our sample the eighty-three churches with English records at the time of their foundation before 1900, leaving eighty-six churches where a switch occurred.

Geographical Scale		Switch Mean	
Louisiana (86)		1907	
Archdiocese New Orleans (23)		1891	
Diocese Baton Rouge (25)		1906	
Diocese Lafayette (26)		1917	
Diocese Houma/Thibodeaux (12)		1916	
Parishes	Switch Mean	Parishes	Switch Mean
East Baton Rouge	One church 1854	St. John the Baptist (3)	1910
Orleans (9)	1880	Terrebonne (4)	1910
Jefferson (2)	1885	St. Landry (4)	1911
Iberville (5)	1887	Lafayette (3)	1905
Ascension (2)	1887	Acadia (5)	1916
Pointe Coupée (3)	1890	Assumption (6)	1919
St. Tammany (3)	1893	Vermilion (5)	1921
St. Charles	One church 1898	Iberia (3)	1923
St. Bernard	One church 1899	St. Martin (3)	1924
Plaquemine (4)	1900	Lafourche (7)	1926
W. Baton Rouge (2)	1901	St. James (5)	1930
St. Mary (4)	1906	Livingston	One church 1934
CHURCH RANGE: 1844–1954			

**Table 1.** Switch mean from French to English in sacramental registers in Louisiana, by dioceses and parishes. Numbers in parenthesis represent the number of churches investigated.



**Figure 2.** Sacramental registers switch dates, 1803–1954.

as the language practice by a majority of local priests took two more decades and, even in some parishes, until World War II.

Let us now examine the dates of language shift according to the geographic location of the churches. Before the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, eleven Catholic churches were established. The first Catholic church with English records from our database is Saint Patrick's, an Irish church in New Orleans established in 1833 (Nolan 2000). Writing sacramental registers in English was clearly a practice introduced by recently established Irish churches in New Orleans. From the start, all their sacramental registers were written in English. The only exception is St. Theresa of Avila, another Irish church, where the switch from French to English occurred four years after its establishment. This wave of new churches conforms to the new demographic importance of the Celtic population in Louisiana. If only by the sheer weight of numbers, the Irish became the first challengers to the French dominance of Catholicism in Louisiana. The number of English registers was subsequently increased by new English-language churches in the new towns in the northern part and the western part of south Louisiana.

From 1857–1880 there was a consolidation of the French language practice. Although the number of new churches with English records (mainly in the northern part of south Louisiana) was on the rise during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period, a total of 29 new churches used French in their sacramental registers, more than twice the number of English churches. Seven churches switch from French to English, three of them shortly after their foundation. The robust presence of French is particularly striking because it again suggests that an extensive period of bilingualism existed and was maintained even after the mass English migration was over. During this period, the Louisiana Catholic Church can be seen as truly bilingual. This result also implies that the loss of French as a prestige language or everyday language was by no means a foregone conclusion; the “triumph” of English was thus by no means a given but rather the result, at least in part, of the sociolinguistic events that happened in the next decades.

Language switch in the sacramental registers was at its peak at the end of the nineteenth century, when more than 22 church registers shifted to English. Two spatial directions can be observed: 1) more churches in New Orleans and in surrounding parishes adopt English, and 2) a movement of English registers from the northern parishes to the southern ones is discernible. English churches are also established in predominantly French areas, most of them being Josephite churches, which were maintained by a Catholic Anglophone order invited by Archbishop Janssens in 1888 specifically to serve the Black community in the Deep South (St. Augustine in New Roads in Pointe Coupée Parish, Saint Benedict the Moor in Bertrandville in Assumption Parish).

In the next time period (1902–1919), the geographical diffusion was even more accentuated; the shift around New Orleans was now completed and English registers were more numerous in southern parishes along the river as well as in the western area. Before WWI, fifteen strongholds switched, and seven remaining churches that had clung to French records during World War I, one in St. Martin Parish, one in Vermillion Parish, one in Assumption Parish, two in St. James Parish, and two in Lafourche Parish, finally gave up the French practice.



5. THE SOURCE OF LANGUAGE CHANGE WITHIN THE LOUISIANA CATHOLIC CHURCH. We would like to discuss briefly the source of language change in sacramental registers. Since the “Irish Catholics” represent the most significant origins of non-French Catholics in Louisiana, we consider them as the basic source of the language shift. In other words, the Louisiana Catholic Church is the context for the formation of an English community of practice in New Orleans, and this Irish community of practice is the locus of language change. Besides the clear implication of the numbers and distribution of English-language registers, two important historical factors emerge to support this hypothesis.

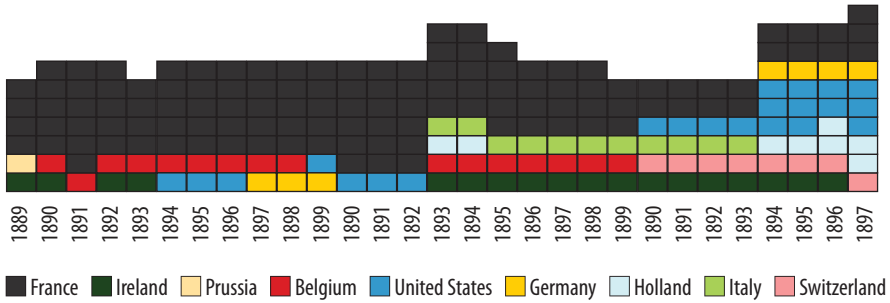
First, despite their on-going troubled history with the English language, the Irish very quickly and firmly established English as a language of power in New Orleans. Although many Irish would have learned French, the prestige language and the language of business in early nineteenth-century New Orleans, as devout Catholics they would likely have been unhappy listening to sermons in French (Niehaus 1966/2004). Second, the Irish came to New Orleans with a critical legacy which none of the previous immigrant groups possessed, including the French: a tradition of political activism. Thus when they settled in Louisiana, their political tradition was intact, Catholicism suddenly became not only tolerated but dominant, and, at last combining religion and politics openly and freely, they quickly yearned for their own church where “God spoke in English” (Niehaus 2004:429). The Irish Catholics had the aptitude, the will, and soon were numerous enough to begin affecting the Louisiana Catholic Church, which was a soft target since French Catholics in Louisiana came from cultures in which Catholicism was assumed and never seriously challenged (or not to the same extent as in Ireland).

The effect of the Irish on the Louisiana Catholic Church has at least one interesting aspect: they changed this institution from within, without significant struggles. No battle for souls was fought between the Irish and the French. However, the Irish had their own set of ethnic practices and spoke the language of the new rulers. Their aspiration was to create a separate community and they succeeded in doing so by introducing and sustaining tension with the French Catholics. They changed the Louisiana Catholic Church because they saw themselves as being more true to the Catholic religion than their slack French co-religionists and, surprisingly, the French church higher-ups agreed and took their side on important issues (Doorley 2001). In this case, religious purity trumped ethnic affiliation.

6. THE INFLUENCE OF THE ARCHDIOCESAN ADMINISTRATION. Although switching the most critical records of the Louisiana Catholic Church from French to English clearly reflected an important social change in Louisiana, no top-down language policy was apparently ever issued by the archdiocesan administration. There is no evidence from the literature about the Louisiana Catholic Church, its internal reports, or the antebellum correspondence between the bishops and the local priests that a decree, a ruling, or even a guideline about language preference ever came from the local ordinary before or after the Civil War.

Letters from Archbishop Antoine Blanc at the end of his period of influence (1830–1860) show that he was no longer interested in hiring monolingual French priests, preferring bilingual pastors, and he often proposed sending away many local priests to learn





**Figure 3.** Composition of the Archiepiscopal Council from 1889 to 1917.

English. Even in the old French-speaking parishes, English-speaking priests were needed to better serve new, booming, English-dominant towns, as indicated by several letters from local priests.

Important changes took place within the Archdiocese at the time when most of the switches occurred (1880–1920). Before his death in 1887, Archbishop Leray requested a French-born bishop in New Orleans because the majority of Catholics in the countryside were descendants of French and Spanish settlers and spoke only French, a variety that he qualified as “*plus ou moins corrompue*” (‘more or less corrupted’). However, Father Jean Baptiste Bogaerts, a Belgium-born priest, wrote several letters to the Clergy expressing the need for the Louisiana Catholic Church to become part of the mainstream of American life so that the new non-French-speaking immigrants would not seek refuge with the Protestants. Bogaerts’ wish was granted when Francis Janssens from Holland was appointed Archbishop in 1888. But after Janssens’ death nine years later, the Holy See appointed as Archbishop Placide Louis Chapelle from France (1897–1905), who was fluent in French, Spanish, and English, and the first choice of the archdiocesan clergy according to the Council Minutes. When Chapelle died of yellow fever eight years later, the Bishop of Puerto Rico, James Blenk, born in Germany but educated at Jefferson College in Convent, Louisiana (and later in France and Ireland), was called to New Orleans and became Archbishop in 1906. With the death of Archbishop Blenk in 1917, the long-established line of French-born or foreign-born bishops and archbishops ended and the Archdiocese of New Orleans received its first American-born archbishop.

Is there written evidence, during the tenures of Archbishops Janssens, Chapelle, and Blenk, that a switch from French to English occurred within the archdiocesan administration? To answer this question, we consulted three sources of materials: (1) a database created from the Catholic directories from 1880 to 1917, which includes the country of origin of all administrators serving on the Archiepiscopal Council and the position they held; (2) the Archiepiscopal Council Minutes, a 141-page ledger-style register, which began in 1858 and was concluded in 1921; and (3) the pastoral letters written from 1844 to 1913 to the Clergy and Laity.

Let us have a look at the composition of the Archiepiscopal Council as well as the language in which the Council Minutes were written. **Figure 3** shows the number and the

country of origin of the Council members who participated in its governance as Vicars General, Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors, Deans, etc. from 1889 to 1917. French-born officers (shown in black) were in the majority during Janssens' and Chapelle's tenures. It is true that the composition changed in 1903 when the Council expanded to nine members, with the appointments of Italian, Belgian, Dutch, and Irish-born consultors, but the number of French-born officers was still high. Metalinguistic comments from the minutes show that meetings from 1887 to 1913 were conducted only in French.

A real shift took place during Blenk's tenure, more precisely between 1908 and 1910; for the first time, the number of non-French-born officers outweighs the number of French-born. By 1914, only two out of six or nine officers are from France and the multi-ethnic composition of the Council slowly led to the use of English during meetings as the only common language. Chancellor Pierre Scotti, who was the recorder, switched from French to English in the middle of the July meeting in 1908 but kept writing the Council Minutes in French in subsequent meetings. When Louisiana-born Father Vincent replaced Chancellor Scotti as recorder in 1913, however, minutes from this date forward are only recorded in English.

The analysis of the language used in pastoral letters to the clergy and parishioners reveals that the status of the French language within the archdiocesan administration slowly changed over time. From 1844 to 1883, when Blanc, Odin, and Perché were Archbishops, pastoral letters were written in French and in English. The English version was sent to church parishes with English-speaking parishioners (Irish) or non-French-speaking parishioners (German or Italian), whereas the French version was distributed to the French-speaking church parishes.

Perhaps as an economic measure, Archbishop Leray initiated the practice of a single letter with French and English printed side-by-side on the same page (French first). Interestingly, Archbishop Janssens, who is credited with having decreased the archdiocesan debt, resumed the practice of separate letters. Archbishop Chapelle reintroduced the single pastoral letter and made a small but significant change: letters are written in both languages side-by-side but English rather than French appears first. During the Spanish-American War, Archbishop Chapelle was sent by the Holy See as Apostolic Delegate to Cuba and Puerto Rico, and Envoy Extraordinary to the Philippine Islands. During his absences, the Administrator Father Rouxel and Vicar General Laval abandoned the side-by-side format and published only one edition of pastoral letters with the entire text written first in English and then in French, a practice followed by Blenk when he was appointed Archbishop in 1906.

What we can observe from the antebellum correspondence and other archival materials is not just the need for English-speaking priests but the need for bilingualism, for fluent English as a second language. At the turn of the twentieth century, that is, when most of the switches occurred, the Archdiocese was particularly concerned with the increasing number of Protestant institutions setting up all over south Louisiana as well as the influence of these institutions over state affairs, not to mention English-speaking local practitioners. Yet this demand emphatically did not imply the suppression of the French language, at least not until World War I. Language shift within the archdiocesan administration from

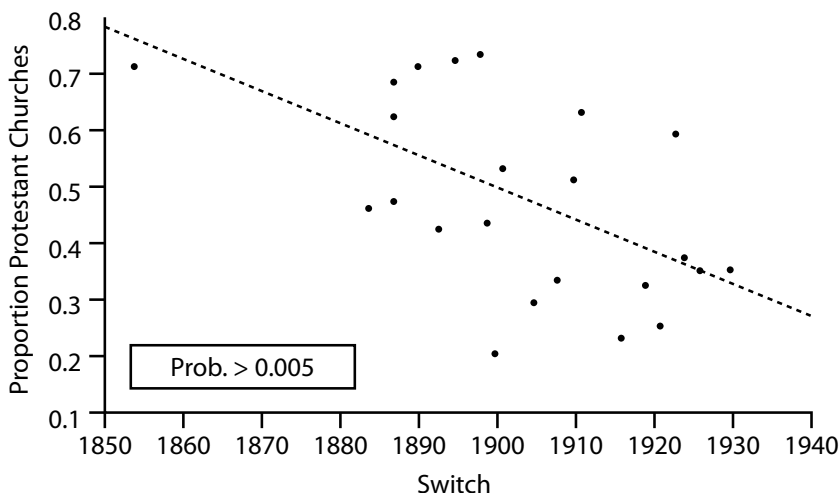
bilingualism to monolingualism in English happened much later than the average date of switch in the sacramental registers. A change from standardized pre-printed registers in French to pre-printed forms first in both French and English, and then in English, no doubt only put pressure on several local priests to initiate a language shift. Nevertheless, many of them had already started to write registers in English when these standardized forms were made available to them. Language shift from bilingualism to monolingualism in English within the Archdiocese appears to be an *a posteriori* reaction to three social changes: 1) a population growth in urban centers; 2) the decreasing number of French-speakers requesting church services in their language; 3) the increasing number of English-speaking priests.

7. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSTRAINTS FOR CHANGE: HINTS FROM THE SACRAMENTAL REGISTERS AND THE PARISH VISITATION REPORTS. Although known for its conservatism, the upper ranks of the Archdiocese nevertheless understood that parish priests were more in touch with the local practitioners. Language choice in sacramental registers (as well as sermons) was a matter apparently left in the hands of the local pastors, who had a better understanding of the local congregation's needs.

The switch to English in the registers was seldom accompanied by an explanatory comment. For many churches, no clues whatsoever from the registers can shed light on the change. We collected ten of these abrupt changes for which we cannot ascertain from the registers what prompted the individual decisions. Our results show that individual bilingual priests had an important impact on the language shift in record keeping: half of the register switches (37) coincide with a change of priest. Although in a few cases a new English-speaking priest would indeed arrive and switch all registers to English, bilingual priests of both French and English origins initiated most language changes. In several instances, native French priests started using English in registers that were previously kept in French by English-speaking priests.

In addition, many priests looked for easy transition times—a register, a new calendar year, the practitioners' first language—to make the switch to English. Twenty-six switches coincide with a change of book format, predominantly during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Before the introduction of pre-printed registers in English, all handwritten entries in registers from several churches in Abbeville, Arnaudville, Breau Bridge, New Iberia, St. Martinville, and Ville Platte from the Diocese of Lafayette were written in French. For a very short period, the priests completed English forms in French and soon after, one after another, they shifted to English.

Parish visitation reports provide other hints about language change. These reports were sent to the Archdiocese by each church parish. Early reports, such as the 1885 questionnaire, were in French or English and offered such information as the number of Catholics (white and persons of color), the number of schools and pupils, and the number of sacraments. There was also a field for denoting language, but we cannot ascertain whether the reports documented the language of the parishioners, the priest, or the language of the service. Most reports (nine out of fifteen) are from churches in New Orleans and annotations about the use of the French, English, Italian, German languages in churches are numerous. By 1912 the parish visitation reports included the nationality of Catholic parishioners and



**Figure 4.** *Proportion of Protestant churches per parish correlated to the parish switch from French to English.*

the number who understood English. A total of 189 reports from 1912, 1915, 1934, 1948, and 1954 were found for 39 church parishes.

What emerged from the data is three language scenarios, each corresponding to an equivalent number of churches from six civil parishes. Interestingly, the locality factor and whether a switch corresponds to a priest change or a book change do not condition this categorization. In the first scenario, a switch occurs when most of the parishioners (from 80% to 100%) understand English. There is a strong correlation between the number of bilingual speakers and the priest's motivation for change. The second scenario is similar to the first one but the correlation is less robust since a switch is realized when half of parishioners (more or less 50%) understand English. In the third scenario, priests initiate changes when none or very few parishioners understand English, that is, when the local conditions did not justify a switch from French to English.

From the registers, we can tell that the new priests were comfortable in both languages, so they had to have an impetus for change other than language ability. The evidence suggests that the priests' overriding motivation for language change is rooted in important societal changes taking place in their locality. One important social change was the establishment of Protestant institutions in parishes once dominated by the Catholic faith. Did their increasing number of Protestant churches trigger the language change at a local level? The assumption is thus that a higher proportion of Protestant organizations in one location would have compelled local priests to shift from French to English early on, not only to lure more parishioners to the Catholic faith but also to avoid losing the ever-increasing number of English-speaking Catholics of French origin.

Using the 1890 statistical report, we calculated the proportion of Methodist, Southern Baptist, Colored Baptist, and Evangelical churches to the number of Catholic churches

in each parish (U.S. Census 1890). **Figure 4** shows the only significant correlation, that is, between the proportional number of Protestant churches and the switch date from French to English. Simply put, the higher the proportion of Protestant churches, the earlier the parish switch. Conversely, we can observe that bilingual practices in several church parishes were preserved until World War II, where the number of Protestant churches and thus the level of competition were low. What the evidence suggests is that the need to defend the faith by using the locally preferred language trumped any conservatism on the part of local priests, even native French pastors.

8. CONCLUSION. In conclusion, the source of language change in the Louisiana Catholic Church was rooted in the massive migration of the Irish Catholics, who challenged the idea of Mass, specifically the sermons, being conducted in French and sacramental registers being written in French (or Latin). This research also provides further evidence that Louisiana underwent a considerable period of bilingualism in the nineteenth century, and the stereotyped view that English “drove out” French needs to be considerably nuanced. For more than a century, the Louisiana Catholic Church adopted an unofficial policy of bilingualism, exemplified by business-oriented forms written in both French and English. This *laissez-faire* and accommodating language policy within the archdiocesan administration contrasts vividly with what happened at the state government level, where decrees about English-only language policies were issued for the legal and education domains (e.g., the 1868 and 1921 Louisiana State Constitutions).

By switching later into English and by appointing non-French-born priests to key diocesan positions, the archdiocesan administration accentuated a change already set in motion in church parishes by several socio-historical events. The fate of its bilingualism was sealed by socio-geographical, social, and attitudinal constraints at their zenith at the turn of the twentieth century, notably the major shift in population centers and the outbreak of anti-Catholicism. Two important constraints were a critical influence on the spatial diffusion of language change in sacramental registers within church parishes. For many priests, their decision to switch registers into English was prompted by an internal change within their church parish; that is, when the increasing number of English-speaking parishioners and French-speaking parishioners who could understand English could justify the shift. In other words, some priests switched registers into English when the use of the French language became an obstacle to their mandate, i.e., spreading Catholic faith. Others priests' decisions were influenced by an external factor, that is, the numerical growth of Protestant churches in the immediate area, especially the expanding Protestant organizations reaching out to both White and impoverished Black small communities, which incited them to shift to English despite serving a French-dominant membership.

By this point we believe we have presented an important piece of the complex linguistic puzzle that is nineteenth century Louisiana. Church documents do not, of course, represent the entire picture, and we are aware that the spoken language situation was quite different in important ways. Nevertheless, the strong correlation of the number of Protestant churches and the switch from French to English in the most important parish records adds

another statistically verifiable fact to our knowledge about the long and ultimately unequal tug of war between linguistic practices.



## REFERENCES

- DOLAN, JAY. 1973. A critical period in American Catholicism. *The review of politics* 35:523–36.
- DOORLEY, MICHAEL. 2001. Irish Catholics and French Creoles: Ethnic struggles within the Catholic church in New Orleans, 1835–1920. *The Catholic historical review* 87a:34–54.
- DULLES, AVERY. 1978. *Models of the Church*. Garden City NY: Doubleday.
- ECKERT, PENELOPE & SALLY MCCONNELL-GINET. 1992. Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as community-based practice. *Annual review of anthropology* 21:461–90.
- MEYERHOFF, MIRIAM. 2002. Communities of practice. In *Handbook of language variation and change*, ed. J.K. Chambers, Peter Trudgill & Natalie Schilling-Estes, 526–48. Oxford: Blackwell.
- NIEHAUS, EARL. 2004[1966]. The Irish and their Church, 1830–1862. In *The Louisiana Purchase bicentennial series in Louisiana*, vol. 19. *Religion in Louisiana*, ed. Charles E. Nolan, 429–441. Lafayette LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette. (Reprinted from *The Irish in New Orleans*, 1966, 98–111, 181–83. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.)
- NOLAN, CHARLES. 2000. *A history of the Archdiocese of New Orleans*. France: Éditions du Signe.
- The Official Catholic Directory*. 2004. New Providence NJ: P.J. Kennedy & Sons.
- United States Census. 1894. Religious bodies. Report on statistics of churches in the United States at the 11th Census, 1890, by Henry K. Carroll, Special Agent, vol. 9. <http://www.archives.gov>.
- WENGER, ETIENNE. 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



## WORDING OR HOW *ACCESS* “GOT VERBED”

WALTER HIRTLE  
*Université Laval, Quebec City*

TO SPEAK OF THE THEME OF THIS CONFERENCE, “Language and linguistics in North America: Diversity and Convergence,” I would like to begin with a point of convergence, an assumption about words which, if not unanimous, seems widespread on this continent and elsewhere, an assumption whose well-foundedness I want to question. To do so, I will present several examples of what appears to be the coining of new words in English, and then examine them in the light of different grammarians’ comments on conversion. This will bring out the inadequacy of the assumption and lead to asking “What’s in a word?” To answer this question I will consider a traditional view of words and propose an alternative assumption about wording in order to provide a different explanation of the examples examined. As a conclusion, I will suggest why the erroneous (in my opinion) assumption has become so widespread and what lesson linguists can draw from this.

1. AN ASSUMPTION. The following citation from a study on prepositions expresses the assumption quite clearly: “Linguists have often assumed that words constitute lexical forms that are stored in a mental dictionary or lexicon” (Tyler & Evans 2003:1). Likewise for a study on lexical semantics: “It will be assumed in this book that a (relatively) closed set of lexical units is stored in the mental lexicon, together with rules or principles of some kind which permit the production of a possibly unlimited number of new (i.e., not specifically stored) units” (Cruse 1986:50). Another linguist speaks of “a lexicon that provides a list of ‘formatives’ (words and morphemes) and their associated properties” (O’Grady 2008:8). And in a book on cognitive linguistics, the authors speak of how “we retrieve a word from the mental lexicon” (Croft & Cruse 2004:109). This idea that speakers store all the words they know in a mental dictionary or lexicon is so widespread that some scholars outside of linguistics take it, not as an assumption, but as a well established fact, as in the following passage from a study by psychologists working in neuroscience:

A normal speaker produces about three words a second. These words are extracted from a stored mental dictionary (a *lexicon*) of somewhere between 20,000 and 50,000 words. On the average, only about one word per million is selected or pronounced incorrectly. Our remarkable ability to produce words... (Kosslyn & Koenig 1992:211)

One may well wonder what this assumption is based on, and the answer is not far to seek. As ordinary speakers we do not have to invent the means of expressing ourselves on the spur of the moment, as we would have to in a situation where we neither speak nor understand the language of those around us. Rather, when speaking, the moment we need a word it



emerges into consciousness ready to take its place in the sentence we are constructing. This gives us the impression that all the words we have acquired are somehow ready to be used whenever we need them. What more natural than the idea that our vocabulary is stocked in memory as in a personal dictionary, that words are “stored in the speaker’s mental lexicon” (Taylor 2002:74) and that we need merely “select” the ones we need for the sentence we are producing.

According to one study, this assumption has been around for some time:

Starting as early as Bloomfield (1933) and rearticulated as recently as Chomsky (1995), influential linguistic theories have asserted that the lexicon is the repository for the arbitrary and the idiosyncratic. (Tyler & Evans 2003:5)

Besides suggesting where it started, this comment brings out another facet of the lexicon assumption. If we can assume that words are learned and stored in memory as arbitrary items, the ultimate elements of a sentence—the way they usually appear in discourse—then there is no need to analyze them, and attention can be focused on syntax. That is, besides appearing obvious, this assumption has the convenience of obviating the problem of the word. This would, in fact, appear to be the reason why “linguists are a bit uncomfortable with the idea of *words*. Words are slippery critters...” (Davis 1993:83). In fact, the very term *word* is not in favour with linguists, many of whom prefer to speak of lexical items, or lexical units, or lexical entries, thereby assimilating words to prefixes, suffixes, idioms and other “arbitrary and idiosyncratic” entities, and some even deny their existence (cf. Mounin 2004:222).

This then is the assumption of many linguists and, as we shall see, of grammarians. Before pursuing our discussion on the abstract level of assumptions and the status of the word as a unit of language, however, I want to look at some data which pose the question concretely, on the level of real examples.

2. NEW WORDS? My attention was first drawn to the mental lexicon question by a commentary about a swimmer, heard during a television broadcast on the Olympics:

(1) Will he medal tonight?

The sentence caught my attention because I understood perfectly well what was a new word for me. What intrigued me here was that I had no such word in my vocabulary, no verb *medal* I could “retrieve from my mental lexicon,” and yet I had no trouble making sense of the sentence. This triggered my interest in the phenomenon which grammarians usually call *conversion*, and I started collecting other examples.

I got the same reaction from some of the more recent ones, picked up by observant students, like the following from a university publication:

(2) I see that kids are focused on science. They’re asking science questions. They’re ‘sciencing’ as (CETUS researcher) David Blades says.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *UVIC Torch* (Autumn 2006:24).



The next two examples were picked up in conversation:

- (3) They're squirreling stuff away.
- (4) It ouches.<sup>2</sup>

And the following was found on the net<sup>3</sup>:

- (5) I got totally homered this Christmas when my Dad bought me a fly fishing kit.

This one I did not understand until the link with the well-known character on television was pointed out, but then, once I understood the sentence, I had the same impression of calling to mind a new word. Like the *medal* example, each of these examples seemed to run counter to the idea that my vocabulary consists of a set of words stocked in a mental dictionary.

Written texts have provided examples for me as well, and then the context helps comprehension:

- (6) I warrant him, Petruchio is Kated.

At this point in *The Taming of the Shrew* (III, ii, 245), *Kated* is readily understood and witnesses to the vigour of Shakespeare's language. The same can be said of the following example from *Coriolanus* (V, i, 5–6):

- (7) A mile before his tent fall down and knee  
The way into his mercy.

While *Kated* is a nonce formation, *knee* here is a new formation from the substantive, according to the *OED*. Looking at things from the point of view of how the speaker/writer formed them, one gets the impression of words being created for the occasion.

The point of these examples is that, whether or not they were just nonce uses created by the speaker on the spur of the moment, for me they were new, yet quite comprehensible. To figure out what makes this possible, I turned to Quirk *et al.* (1985) where a whole section (1558–63) treats such uses as examples of conversion, i.e., “the derivational process whereby an item is adapted or converted to a new word class without the addition of an affix.” This attributes to the speaker, and presumably the hearer, a mental process for deriving new words from known items. The above verbs are called *denominals* because, except for *ouches*, they are, according to Quirk *et al.*, derived from nouns. They also give examples of denominal adjectives, nouns converted into adjectives, as in:

- (8) His accent is very Mayfair (very Harvard).

<sup>2</sup> When I suggested this might well have been a child speaking, one scholar, married to a phonetician, pointed out that her seven year old daughter once said: “Oh Dad, stop phoneticianing.”

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=homered>

- (9) She dislikes city life.

Like previous examples, *Mayfair* is striking as an adjective, but the interesting one here is *city* because there is no longer the striking effect of a new use, of a conversion, and this opens up another, far more prevalent, aspect of the question.

Considering *city* a case of conversion brings in the historical aspect because, although common as an adjective today, this implies that as long ago as the fourteenth century (*OED*) someone first used *city* as an adjective. This also applies to many denominal verbs (*to bottle, to grease, to elbow, etc.*), to deverbal nouns, (*a desire, a swim, a catch, etc.*), to de-adjectival nouns (*a natural, a weekly, an empty, etc.*) and de-adjectival verbs (*to calm, to humble, to empty, etc.*), few of which would attract attention today as being derived from another word. In short, these few examples indicate that this process of word formation is, and has been, far more prevalent than it appears at first sight. Finally, there are less easily classified examples like *ouches* above, which appears to be derived from the interjection, and less frequent cases like:

- (10) It tells you about the how and the why of flight.  
 (11) They downed tools in protest.

Quirk *et al.* consider these to be derived from closed-class words, though it is not clear why they consider *down* here a convert from its use as a preposition, rather than its use as an adverb, or an adjective, or a substantive.

The point to be remembered from this rapid survey is that uses like those above which catch our attention because of their novelty, witness to an innovative process “now available for extending the lexical resources of the language” (Quirk *et al.* 1985:1558) and so are of interest to the linguist. On the other hand, such uses are just the tip of the iceberg since the vast majority of novel uses in the past—all except nonce uses—have become part of our everyday usage. A glance in a dictionary to see how many entries are classified under two or more parts of speech will show how widespread this means of word formation has been historically, even though in general we are no longer aware when we use converts (like *glance, show, even, general, converts* in this sentence). All this raises an important question. What is this process called conversion? How can it produce new words?

3. GRAMMARIANS ON CONVERSION. Grammars consulted characterize the process in terms of its result. Most<sup>4</sup> consider that *medal* is “used as” a verb in the above example, a view implying that that is just a different use of the noun, the same word. Other grammars speak of a word being “totally or partially converted”<sup>5</sup> into another part of speech. In both cases, the same word is found, either in another use or with another part of speech. This would also seem to be the position of Quirk *et al.*, when they speak of “the derivational

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Curme, (1931:534-8); Christophersen & Sandved (1969:115-17); Schibsbye (1970:123-28).

<sup>5</sup> Poutsma (1926:192); cf. also Zandvoort (1957:265-77).

process whereby an item is adapted or converted to a new word class." For such grammarians, then, it appears that the part of speech is an accidental element, something added on to, but not a constituent element of, the word, and so conversion does not produce new words, new items.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002:1640–44) adopt a different position: "We include conversion within the set of lexical word-formation processes because we see it as creating new words." The reason they give for this is clear: "we regard any difference in primary category as sufficient to establish a difference between one word and another." That is, they recognize that a different "word class" or "primary category", i.e., a different part of speech, is the mark of a different word.<sup>6</sup> That is, notwithstanding what they have in common meaning-wise, *medal* in example (1) is a different word from *medal* used as a noun, and this in spite of the fact that there is no overt indication of this difference within the word. In short, the part of speech is an essential component of a word.

Grammarians who speak of converting a word obviously take for granted that the word exists already, presumably in some sort of mental lexicon, but none of them indicate how words are converted. Huddleston and Pullum describe the process as follows: "a word is formed from a pre-existing morphological unit by simply giving it new grammatical properties." That is, recognizing the different syntactic possibilities of verbs and adjectives, they assume "the creation of the verb *humble* from the adjective *humble*." But to my knowledge, no grammarian has ever analyzed this assumed process of creation or conversion, of "simply giving new grammatical properties" to a word.

One might of course reply that the job of grammarians is to describe and not to analyze and explain, and that they have done their job when they observe *medal* or *humble* or *down* used as verbs and assume that this result, like any other result, must have been produced by some process, some "word-formation process". Granted that this lets grammarians off the hook, we turn to linguists, but to my knowledge no analysis of this process of word forming has been forthcoming to explain how the ordinary speaker can innovate as in a sentence I heard recently:

(12) That will involve a lot of grandfathering.

One gets the impression that the assumed existence of words ready-made in a mental lexicon has become so entrenched in people's minds that, outside of cases involving affixing and compounding, the very idea that a process is required for forming a word like *medal* or *humble* or *down* has not occurred to most linguists. One of the rare questionings of the makeup of a word in influential linguistic theories arises toward the end of a lengthy study on morphology from a generative point of view, where the author finally reaches the conclusion that "one of the key unresolved questions in morphology is 'what is a word?'" (Spencer 1991:453). The author seems to suggest that perhaps a word is not arbitrary, that perhaps it is analyzable into its component parts, that perhaps this has been neglected.

---

<sup>6</sup> The traditional expression "part of speech" is adopted here because it is closer to the ordinary speaker's experience: words are parts of the speech, the sentence, being constructed.

Whether or not the cause of this neglect of the word is the lexicon assumption, the notion of conversion poses the as yet unexplained problem of how a word is recycled if it already exists ready-made in the mental lexicon. This problem concerns not just cases like the above examples that strike us as innovative today, but also the far more frequent cases of words which were innovative at some time in the past and today do not appear to involve anything to be explained. For example, is *empty*, commonly found in three parts of speech to be considered three homonyms (cf. Huddleston & Pullum, 1641), each an entry in the mental lexicon? Or is there one entry which is simply given new grammatical properties according to the needs of discourse? Since neither of these is satisfactory as an explanation, we will examine the question from a more general point of view in order to analyze what sort of word-forming process would make innovation possible, innovation resulting in such versatility of usage in contemporary English.

4. WHAT'S IN A WORD? The diverse comments on conversion cited above presuppose that one component of the word, its physical sign, undergoes no change, nor do they mention any change in another component, its lexical meaning. This leaves the third component, the word's grammatical properties: conversion is a process which involves a word's grammatical meaning, its part of speech. That is, the grammarians consulted make a distinction, often implicitly, within the word's meaning between the lexical and the grammatical, a distinction which is by no means original with them. In his history of English grammars up to 1800, Michael (1970:44–47) points out that medieval grammarians, building on the concept of words as “the smallest unit of discourse” coming from antiquity, make “a threefold distinction between *vox*, the mere speech-sound; *dictio*, the word regarded as a meaningful speech-sound; *pars*, the word regarded as a syntactical unit.” That is to say, the speech-sound or sign both signifies a word's lexical import, or lexeme, and “consignifies”<sup>7</sup> its grammatical import, or part of speech. In short, since it is the part of speech which determines a word's function in the sentence, “the syntactical function of a word is part of its meaning.” Michael recounts that, “The renaissance grammarians made no use of the two most important ideas about the word which were available to them: Dionysius Thrax's description of it as a minimum unit of discourse and the speculative grammarians' distinction between semantic and syntactic units.” That is, the distinction between a word's lexical and grammatical meanings was no longer considered pertinent.

Grammarians' failure to take into account such a crucial distinction within the word may have been occasioned by the drastic reduction of visible morphology since antiquity, particularly in English, or by a positivist leaning which left meaning in the shade. Although the work of nineteenth century linguists in historical grammar always distinguished between the lexical and the grammatical on the level of the sign, this distinction on the level of the meaning within the word is often ignored or considered of no interest even today. One consequence of this is that the word itself is often neglected regardless of Saussure's view (1916:154) that, “[i]n spite of the difficulty of defining it, the word is a unit which imposes itself on the mind, something central in the mechanism of language.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> “To signify conjointly; to mean or signify when combined with something.” *OED*

<sup>8</sup> My translation.

Unfortunately, Saussure did not explore the subject further, considering that it would take a whole book to do so, but in a moment we shall turn to a linguist who did undertake to analyze the word.

Words are in fact a universal in language, not just in the sense that in every language we find “minimum units of discourse”, but in the stronger sense that we find words in every act of speech.<sup>9</sup> Miller calls words “the fundamental units of human language” (1991:261) and stresses their importance for linguists when he asks:

What is at issue in a scientific discussion of words is not so much specific words as wordiness: why are all languages wordy? Why are words a universal design feature of languages? It is words in general, not scientific words, that are scientifically important (1991:5).

Moreover Miller echoes the medieval grammarians when he brings out the three components of a word as follows:

Each word is the synthesis of a concept, an utterance, and a syntactic role. A person who knows a word knows what it means, knows how to pronounce it, and knows the contexts in which it can be used. These are not three independent kinds of knowledge; they are different views of a single entity (viii).

In like fashion, Wierzbicka (1988:561) makes a clear distinction between the lexical and the grammatical when she speaks of “pre-packaged semantic bundles” in the lexicon, and “pre-packaged semantic configurations” in the grammar. This manner of expressing it suggests that what is pre-packaged is not the word itself but its “semantic bundle” or lexeme, and its “semantic configuration” or part of speech. Distinguishing between lexemes and the grammatical system as two components of a speaker’s linguistic resources in this way is a crucial step, one which leads to the next point I want to make.

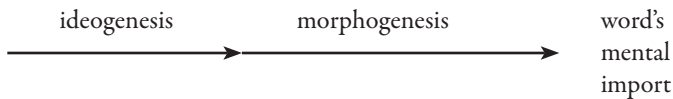
Granted that the meaning of a word is composed of a lexical component or semantic bundle which is signified, and a grammatical component or semantic configuration which is consigned, the question of the relation between the two remains to be clarified. Though she does not develop the idea, what Wierzbicka appears to be implying here is that the grammatical configures, gives a certain shape or form to, the lexical. This is precisely the relation perceived some years previously by Gustave Guillaume, the only linguist I know of who devoted his career to developing a theory of the word.<sup>10</sup>

For Guillaume, it is the relation of matter to form that holds between the two components of a word’s mental import: a lexeme is the notional content or matter which the part of speech configures or forms. This of course presupposes a process of grammatical

---

<sup>9</sup> It would be more precise to say that “vocables” are universal since some languages do not include a grammatical import in their minimum sayable units. This distinction need not be introduced here, however, since we are concerned with English.

<sup>10</sup> See my *Language in the Mind* (2007a) for an introduction to this theory.



**Figure 1.** Forming a word's meaning.

configuring or categorizing which provides a word with its final form, its part of speech, a process which Guillaume (19894:113–18) called *morphogenesis*. Morphogenesis is a mental operation undertaken every time a speaker produces a word, though in most cases in English a word's visible morphology gives no indication of its part of speech. A word's part of speech is generally recognized by the listener thanks to its position in the sentence. This point is important, crucial even, because it implies that through the process of morphogenesis the speaker of example (1) configured the lexeme *medal* as a verb, and this determined the predicative function the word *medal* would fulfill in the sentence, and this in turn determined its place in the sentence. But for me as listener, it was the position of the word *medal* in the sentence that indicated its function and so led me to form or configure the lexeme 'medal' as a verb.

What I am trying to show here is that a word is not an arbitrary, unanalyzable element of language, but a unit the speaker puts together, i.e., constitutes, in view of the sentence being constructed. A necessary part of this process of formation is to provide the word with a part of speech giving it certain syntactic possibilities. Otherwise all words would be like interjections "lacking grammatical connection." But there is more than this. The appropriate lexical matter must also be called to mind—that specific lexeme, among all the "pre-packaged semantic bundles" the speaker has learned, which best corresponds to what the speaker wants to talk about. This is another part of the word-forming process, a part Guillaume calls *ideogenesis*. Since ideogenesis provides the lexical matter to be formed, its result is needed for carrying out morphogenesis. Thus there is a temporal, before/after relation between the two pre-conscious mental operations which can be most simply diagrammed as in **Figure 1**.

Each of these operations calls for further analysis, in lexical semantics and grammatical semantics respectively, but this simple figure suffices to bring out the relationship which is important for our needs here, namely that, meaning-wise, word-formation is a two-phase process whereby the result of ideogenesis is configured by morphogenesis to produce a word's mental import, its meaning.

The importance of viewing word-formation in this way is that it replaces the static view of retrieving a word listed in a mental lexicon by a dynamic view of calling to mind an appropriate lexeme and configuring it to produce the mental import of a word (whose physical sign must then be actualized). This view presupposes that speakers do not possess ready-made words but something far more useful: the necessary resources—the lexemes they have acquired and the grammatical systems—to produce whatever words they need at the moment of need. The advantage of this is nowhere more evident than in cases of so-called conversion because it implies that a lexeme (linked to a sign) exists in our mind with no grammatical strings attached (though its lexical matter may predispose it to be more readily formed as a verb than as a substantive, or vice versa).

5. WORDING. Just as we speak of “linguaging” something when it is being expressed in language, and “Englishing” a text when it is being translated into English, so I may be permitted to speak of “wording” an experience when it is being put into words. In any case, this will help us keep in mind the dynamics of word-formation involved in examples discussed above, starting with *Will he medal tonight?* Having in mind one swimmer’s performance in the coming competition, the commentator called on the lexeme *medal* as the most appropriate notion to suggest a comparison with other competitors. Instead of configuring it as a substantive as in *Will he win a medal tonight?* he actualized the lexeme to express an activity necessarily linked with the metal object in the Olympics—a winning performance. Confronted with *medal* in the position of an infinitive, I construed it as a verb and interpreted the lexeme not as representing the object but rather an activity linked with it, the activity of obtaining a medal. Discussion of the example later brought out that it might also be interpreted as a different activity associated with the metal object, one arising after the winning performance, namely, receiving the medal during the awards ceremony.

This example helps show not only how abstract a lexeme must be before the speaker forms it as a word and then puts it into relation with other words in the sentence, but also how the listener has to perform similar mental operations to understand the word and, ultimately, the sentence. Furthermore, the example indicates how the lexeme is formed or configured or grammaticized,<sup>11</sup> and that it would be misleading to speak of conversion here. The same can be said of the example *They’re sciencing*, where the speaker forms the lexeme as a verb to express the activity associated with, or rather inherent in, science. Similarly for *asking science questions* in the same example, where the lexeme is configured as an adjective: the notion ‘science’ calls to mind certain properties, here attributed to the questions asked. Again, such unusual uses (instead of the expected *doing science* and *scientific questions*) bring out how adaptable the abstract lexeme *science* is, ready to be actualized to meet the needs of the speaker in the particular sentence being constructed.

The other examples above illustrate the same word-forming process. *It ouches*, *squirrel-ing stuff away* and even *knee the way* all call to mind a typical activity linked with the prototypical use of the lexeme, just as *very Mayfair/Harvard* suggest a certain quality or type of accent associated with these well known places. On the other hand, to be able to interpret *got homered* and *Petruchio is Kated* requires a familiarity with the particular situation and the particular person designated by the corresponding proper noun. For the listener, the novelty of all these uses, and particularly the last two, involves a feeling of discovering the meaning they call to mind, and this gives a special expressive impact to them.

The remaining examples, however, involve no novelty. *City life*, *to bottle*, *a swim*, etc. are such common uses of the lexeme that they would probably be noticed only by grammarians and linguists as word-formations introduced into usage in the past and now understood as routine configurations of the lexeme. Nevertheless they form a very large part, if not most, of our vocabulary and so pose an even more important problem for the linguist. The rudimentary description of the word-forming process in English presented above applies just

<sup>11</sup> See my *Lessons on the English Verb* (2007b) for the detail of how a lexeme is formed by the different subsystems of the verb.



as well to these commonplace uses as to the nonce and innovative ones. To take only one example: by postulating that the very abstract lexeme *down* is to be configured by morphogenesis each time it is used, we have a basis for explaining how it is grammaticized by any one of five systemic programs depending on what kind of a word the speaker needs for the projected sentence—*ups and downs*, *downing a drink*, *a down payment*, *to fall down*, *down the drain*. We even find *down* providing a lexical component for a compound as in *to down-grade*. A use like *the down from geese*, however, would be a homonym, that is, an identical sign signifying a different lexeme.

6. CONCLUSION. My aim here has been to question the assumption that words are stored in a mental lexicon as pre-fabricated items to be selected or retrieved when needed for constructing a sentence. Calling on the traditional view that a word's meaning consists of a lexical component and a grammatical component, I proposed an alternative assumption: that a word is (re)constructed during the moment of speech each time it is needed. Speakers combine the appropriate lexeme (the one best representing what they have in mind to express) and the appropriate part of speech (providing the necessary syntactic capabilities) to produce the word capable of playing the roles, lexical and grammatical, required of it in the sentence under construction. That is, the resources permanently available to the speaker are not words, but something far more useful, namely, the formative elements needed to construct words: lexemes (with their signs) and grammatical systems.

One may well wonder why the assumption of a word-stocked lexicon is so widespread. It probably reflects the view of the ordinary speaker since the only experience we have of words is when they emerge into consciousness, i.e., when they are already formed. We can have no direct experience of the word-forming process, only of its result. As in other sciences, the linguist's job is to explain the observed result by what led up to it, and so a pre-conscious mental operation accomplished during the act of speech was proposed as an alternative hypothesis to the mental lexicon hypothesis, which does not explain how speakers can come up with new words.

Viewing word-formation as a two-phase process in this way makes it easy to understand how the same lexeme can arise in grammatically different words. This is a widespread phenomenon, as testified by the many entries in a dictionary listed under different parts of speech. Explaining such a common fact of usage is in itself an achievement, but this incipient theory of word-formation applies to all words in English.<sup>12</sup> Exploring its implications is therefore an undertaking of fundamental importance for any linguist who considers that the word is "something central in the mechanism of language" because words are "the fundamental units of human language."

We began with a brief discussion of conversion to focus on the problem of how a speaker can create a new word, and ended up showing that this is always a possibility since, whenever we speak, we (re)construct the words we need. We will finish with a striking example of word-making from a comic strip character:

---

<sup>12</sup> And words in other languages with grammatical systems based on the parts of speech.



I like to verb words....

Remember when “access” was a thing? Now it’s something you *do*. It got verbed.

Verbing wierds language.<sup>13</sup>

These amusing comments suggest the wording process involved in verbing *access*, and bring out how a speaker’s language resources cope with the ever-changing panorama of one’s conscious awareness—how languaging words experiencing.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Fine & Josephson (2004:13).



## REFERENCES

- BLOOMFIELD, LEONARD. 1933. *Language*. New York: Hold, Rinehart & Winston.
- CHRISTOPHERSEN, P. & A. O. Sandved. 1969. *An advanced English grammar*. London: Macmillan.
- CHOMSKY, NOAM. 1995. *The minimalist program*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- CROFT, WILLIAM & D. Alan Cruse. 2004. *Cognitive linguistics*. Cambridge: University Press.
- CRUSE, D. A. 1986. *Lexical semantics*. Cambridge: University Press.
- CURME, GEORGE O. 1931. *Syntax*. Boston: Heath.
- DAVIS, JOEL. 1993. *Mother tongue: How humans create language*. New York: Carol.
- FINE, EDITH H. & Judith P. Josephson. 2004. *Nitty-gritty grammar: A not-so-serious guide to clear communication*. New York: Scholastic Inc.
- GUILLAUME, GUSTAVE. 1984. *Foundations for a science of language*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- HIRTLE, WALTER. 2007a. *Language in the mind: An introduction to Guillaume’s theory*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- . 2007b. *Lessons on the English verb: No expression without representation*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.
- HUDDLESTON, RODNEY & GEOFFREY K. Pullum. 2002. *The Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KOSSLYN, STEPHEN M. & OLIVIER KOENIG. 1992. *Wet mind: The new cognitive neuroscience*. New York: The Free Press, Macmillan.
- MICHAEL, IAN. 1970. *English grammatical categories and the tradition to 1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MILLER, GEORGE A. 1991. *The science of words*. New York: Scientific American Library.
- MOUNIN, GEORGES. 2004. *Dictionnaire de la linguistique*, 4th ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- O’GRADY, WILLIAM. 2008. The emergentist program. <http://www.ling.hawaii.edu/faculty/ogrady>.

- POUTSMA, H. 1926. *A grammar of late modern English*, part 2, sec. 2. Groningen: P. Noordhoff.
- QUIRK, R., S. GREENBAUM, G. LEECH & J. SVARTVIK. 1985. *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.
- DE SAUSSURE, FERDINAND, 1916/1955. *Cours de linguistique générale*. Paris: Payot.
- SCHIBSBYE, KNUD. 1970. *A modern English grammar*. London: Oxford University Press.
- SPENCER, ANDREW. 1991. *Morphological theory: An introduction to word structure in generative grammar*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- TAYLOR, JOHN R. 2002. *Cognitive grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- TYLER, ANDREA & VYVYAN EVANS. 2003. *The semantics of English prepositions: Spatial scenes, embodied meaning and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- WIERZBICKA, ANNA. 1988. *The semantics of grammar*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- ZANDVOORT, R. W. 1957. *A handbook of English grammar*. London: Longmans Green.



WINNER OF THE PRESIDENTS'  
2008 POST-DOCTORAL PRIZE

## PRESIDENTS' POST-DOCTORAL PRIZE

**The Presidents' Post-Doctoral Prize** is awarded annually to the lecture judged to make the greatest contribution to linguistic knowledge by an author who has had a doctoral degree or its equivalent for less than five years. The judging panel consists of the current LACUS President and Vice President along with all past presidents in attendance at the meeting.

## LANGUAGE SHIFT IN THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH PRESS OF WEST MICHIGAN

KARA VANDAM  
*Kaplan University*

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOCIOLOGY OF LANGUAGE developed by Joshua Fishman (1989), this paper illustrates a multi-generational stable Dutch-English bilingualism in the West Michigan Christian Reformed Church (CRC) Dutch community based in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the period of the 1860s through the 1910s, which converted rapidly to a monolingual English community in the 1920s and 1930s. This paper examines this language shift through an analysis of the publications made by the community in these two time periods, building on prior research which documents the language shift in other areas of the community, including the schools (VanDam 2007a), church (VanDam 2007a, 2007b), and grave markers (VanDam 2009). It also contrasts the press of this community with that of its neighboring and co-founded West Michigan Reformed Church of America (RCA) Dutch community, based in Holland, Michigan, thirty miles from the CRC community in Grand Rapids.

Contrasting the data from these two time periods demonstrates a language shift occurring in the CRC community in the number of publications in Dutch, and in the number of authors writing and publishing in Dutch in West Michigan. Many publications, especially serial publications, ended in this period, while others switched to publishing in English.

1. THE LANGUAGE OF THE PRESS: 1860's–1910's. A robust press served the Dutch colonists throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The language in which that press appeared varied, however. The Dutch language press struggled in RCA-dominated areas—a community which had adopted English as its primary language early in this period—and Dutch papers rarely lasted more than a year or two, unable to find the necessary subscribers to make the paper's publication financially viable. The Dutch press in CRC-dominated Grand Rapids had a different path, one which superficially might look the same, as many of its Dutch newspapers lasted only a few years. As will appear in the discussion to follow, however, the reason why was quite different and underscores the preservation of the Dutch language, not its loss.

The data in this paper are drawn from Hendrik Edelman's 1986 work *The Dutch Language Press in America*. This work of just over two-hundred pages provides a bibliographic inventory of Dutch publications from 1693 to 1948, organized by year of publication. Edelman further provides an introduction to the bibliographic inventory of approximately forty pages which provided additional background information and context for this study. The analysis in this section is based on the chronological bibliographic inventory and is thus my own.

One of the first Dutch publishers was the state of Michigan itself. Michigan was eager to attract more Dutch settlers as it felt they made ideal residents: those who appeared drawn to emigrate were religious, abstained from alcohol consumption, and were generally highly law-abiding. Michigan translated its state constitution into Dutch and published it in 1851. Messages from the Governor's office were translated and published in 1859, 1861, 1863, 1871, and 1889. The Michigan Commission on Immigration translated and published guides to immigration and citizenship in 1882 and 1884. To understand the significance of this, it is instructive to compare it to the state of Iowa's actions, which had a large migration from the Netherlands—and the same religious, law-abiding population—in the same period.<sup>1</sup> Iowa's state constitution was not translated into Dutch, its Commission on Immigration published only one guide, in 1870, and its gubernatorial messages span from 1857 to 1871 only. This further establishes the heightened resilience of the Dutch language in West Michigan in this period.

As mentioned above, English was adopted quickly in RCA-dominated Holland, and it was the de facto language of the community by the late nineteenth century. Most of the Holland-based Dutch newspapers appeared with an English version, and before long there were few Dutch papers left in Holland, Michigan. This is not surprising given that the community had joined the English-speaking New York-based Reformed Church of America. In fact, this alignment caused the schism in 1857 which broke the West Michigan church into two communities, the Holland RCA and the Grand Rapids CRC. The RCA had also made an early decision to use English in their schools, rather than Dutch, which the CRC preserved. The RCA publications which did appear in Dutch, such as *De Wekker*, were often tied to moves within the RCA to court its more conservative members and prevent them from leaving the church for the CRC.<sup>2</sup>

The Dutch press in Grand Rapids, in contrast to the RCA Holland press, flourished. Its nineteenth century publications included *De Lantaarn* (*The Lantern*), *De Amerikaansche Stoompost* (*The American Steam Post*), *De Honingbij* (*The Honeybee*), *Een Stem des Volks* (*Voice of the People*), *De Christen Werkman* (*The Christian Workman*), and *De Stemmen* (*The Voices*), to name a few of dozens. Many of these papers had short lives, but that was not due to a lack of readership or subscribers. Generally, it was because the purpose of the papers was specific and short-lived. For example, *Een Stem des Volks* was a pro-temperance paper published from 1893–1900. When the Prohibition Party suffered a great defeat in 1900, its publisher, Gerritt Roelofs, decided there was not enough current support for temperance to justify the further publication of the paper. Its demise had nothing to do with the language of its publication. Similarly, the popular bilingual Yankee Dutch, a satirical paper published from 1882–1890, appeared during a time when the Dutch were settled, had seen their first community members ascend to positions of prominence within the community, and were very self-confident in their ethnicity.

<sup>1</sup> The Pella, Iowa colony was a similar size, from the same Calvinist religious tradition, and thus was very similar in make-up to the Michigan communities. It also had close ties to the Michigan communities.

<sup>2</sup> A legitimate concern as the communities nearly split the original community in two.

Interestingly, the CRC church itself published little in this period. The religious schism which had resulted in the CRC's split from the RCA closely aligned the CRC with conservative Calvinists still in the Netherlands. As a result, most religious publications in the nineteenth century used by the CRC were published by publishing houses in the Netherlands.

2. THE LANGUAGE OF THE PRESS: 1920'S-1930'S. In the period after World War I, a radical shift occurs in the number of publications in Dutch, and in the number of authors writing and publishing in Dutch, in the CRC community. For this analysis, the publications from West Michigan publishing houses, most of which were located in Grand Rapids, were inventoried, though publishers in Kalamazoo and Muskegon, Michigan also produced Dutch publications in this period. Notably, after 1933, most Dutch publications were procured from publishing houses in the Netherlands.

With respect to religious literature, the CRC did begin publishing its own materials in the early twentieth century. The first CRC publisher of note, Eerdmans Publishing Co., was founded in 1911. Eerdmans published in Dutch until the late 1910s. In the year of its founding "the Dutch language was still prevalent in orthodox Christian circles, as well as among new immigrants. The size of that market was still growing..." (Edelman 1986:36). Yet the situation changed dramatically and rapidly. In 1920, the American book-trade journal *Publisher's Weekly* reported of Eerdmans Publishing that:

The flow of immigration to this country from Holland has largely ceased, and as the new generation grows up the demand for books in the Holland language has, to a large extent, changed to a demand for similar books in English, so the sales of the firm are now as high as ninety percent in English (Edelman 1986:36).

Eerdmans found the best markets for Dutch-language books, printed in Grand Rapids, were the Netherlands and South Africa (Edelman 1986:36).

The first conclusion that can be drawn from the data is an overall decline in the number of Dutch publications by West Michigan publishing houses annually. **Table 1** (overleaf) demonstrates this decline.

Many publications, especially serial publications, ended in this period. *Het Ideaal* ceased publication in 1916 after nine years. Others switched to English: *Calvin College Chimes*, which had been bilingual from 1907–1917, was published using English exclusively after 1917.

What make the data even more compelling are the authors of these publications. In 1913 twenty-three Dutch publications were produced by West Michigan publishing houses, and no two publications had the same author. In 1917, there were eighteen publications in total, and two authors each had two publications: H. Bultema and L. Penning. In 1922, there are fifteen publications, and two authors have three publications: H. Bultema and R. Janssen. Consider, however, the period from 1925–1933. In this period, of the twenty total publications, nine are written by two men: H. Hoeksma and G. Vos, with six and three publications respectively. The period from 1930–1933 is even more striking. Of the six total publications, four were written by H. Hoeksma, and one was written by G. Vos. After this

Year	West Michigan Dutch publications	Annual Average for Select Periods
1910	12	1910–1915: <i>15 publications/year on average</i>
1911	9	
1912	17	
1913	23	
1914	16	
1915	11	
1916	18	1916–1920: <i>16 publications/year on average</i>
1917	18	
1918	19	
1919	15	
1920	12	
1921	10	1921–1925: <i>10 publications/year on average</i>
1922	15	
1923	12	
1924	7	
1925	6	
1926	1	1926–1933: <i>2 publications/year on average</i>
1927	5	
1928	1	
1929	1	
1930	2	
1931	2	
1932	1	
1933	1	

**Table 1.** Dutch-language publications by West Michigan publishing houses, 1910–1933.

year, Vos would publish—in Dutch at least<sup>3</sup>—only once more, in 1934, but notably he had changed publishing houses. Rather than publishing through Grand Rapids’ Eerdmans Press where his prior material had been published, his final work was published by Flagg Publishers in Santa Ana, California.<sup>4</sup> Hoeksma would continue to write and be published

<sup>3</sup> It is not known if Vos ever published in English.  
<sup>4</sup> California became a mid-century home for Dutch publication in the United States because many people from the former Dutch colony of Indonesia settled there (often because they were not permitted to emigrate to the Netherlands).



in Dutch, but his pace was notably slowed. After publishing at least one and not infrequently two works in Dutch in the years 1923, 1924, 1925, 1927, 1930, 1931, and 1933, he did not publish again until 1938. His remaining works in Dutch appear in 1938, 1939, 1946, and 1949, and never was more than one work published in any of these years.

As noted above, after 1920 Eerdman's Publishing House found the largest market for its works in Dutch in the Netherlands and South Africa. By the 1930s, however, it appears that Eerdman's—once the largest publisher of Dutch works in the United States—had also moved away from publishing in Dutch. In the years from 1933–1948, only three Eerdman's publications appear in the Dutch press bibliographic record. The first is a book of psalms published in 1942 and it is the only monolingual Dutch publication of the three; the second, a “Dutch Grammar with Conversation,” was published in 1944; the last, published in 1948, is a bilingual publication titled *Nederlandse Bloemlezing; A Dutch and Flemish Anthology of Poetry and Prose*.

3. EXTERNAL FACTORS MOTIVATE LANGUAGE SHIFT. In the first decade of settlement (1850–1860) in West Michigan, the Dutch felt no particular need to assert their “Dutchness.” As discussed in VanDam (2009) their faith was what was critical to them and the Dutch language and their faith had yet to be tied. CRC members began to assert the Dutch language as a marker of their faith after the 1857 schism with the RCA Dutch, who had quickly shifted to the English language. The larger non-Dutch, English-speaking community around them generally supported their preservation of the Dutch language because—unlike its view of other immigrants—the Dutch were good citizens.<sup>5</sup>

That the Dutch were positively viewed by their non-Dutch city is clear in many sources across these decades. A newspaper article entitled “Assault of Kendall Woodward, Esq” in the *Grand Rapids Eagle*—the most prominent daily newspaper of the city at that time—of January 5, 1857, demonstrates how early this positive attitude was established, less than a decade after the first “Hollander” settled in the city. The article concerned the New Year's Day assault on Kendall Woodward, Esq. and his family in their home by a group of “foreign rascals.” The article's purpose was to criticize the judge for giving too light a sentence<sup>6</sup>—no jail time, just payment of damages—and to expound on what “foreigners” needed to be taught about American values:

Our *foreign* as well as native born citizens should be made to learn that, although this is a “free country,” yet [*sic*] is only free to those who behave themselves and obey its just and wholesome laws. No man, no matter where born, is at liberty to get intoxicated and then floilish his shillelah<sup>7</sup> over the heads of peaceable citizens,

<sup>5</sup> And in Grand Rapids, they ultimately grew to a quarter of the population around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

<sup>6</sup> Though the modern observer is likely to be impressed by the swiftness of justice, a mere four days after the crime was committed.

<sup>7</sup> A *shillelah* (or *shillelagh*) is an Irish term for a cudgel, a wooden club. “Floilish” appears to mean something similar to brandish, and thus could simply be a typographical error or a deliberate attempt to mock Irish pronunciation for an intended “flourish” or “flail.”

and their families... It is no more than proper for us to add, in this connection, that the Hollanders are exempt from any reflection which the word foreigner, in this article, might seem to convey. *They* are sober, temperate, and industrious to a remarkable degree, make worthy and respectable citizens, and are entitled to our regard. The same may also be said of the Germans generally—But of the Irish...

The article goes on to describe the Irish using terms such as *ignorance*, *avarice*, *indolence* and a taste for the “craythur,”<sup>8</sup> and the author’s use of Irish terms such as *shillelagh* and *craythur* further the anti-Irish stereotype through an intentional mocking of the Irish. This is in sharp contrast to the positive image promoted by, and lengths to which the author went, in order to assure the readers that the Dutch were not a part of the group deserving derision or mockery. The lack of negative Dutch stereotypes persisted for decades.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, a common stereotype of immigrants was that they were for the organization of labor into unions, they advocated strikes, and they were conspiring against America in their native languages (Crawford 1996). “Hollanders” escaped even this stereotype: they crossed picket lines during the Grand Rapids furniture strike of 1911,<sup>9</sup> were loyal members of the Republican Party, and were generally anti-union, a stance that the pro-business newspapers of the time praised them for (Doezema 1979).

With the lack of negative stereotypes and the wealth of positive ones, the Dutch of Grand Rapids were able to operate from a position of self-confidence, and as Bradley (2002) notes, a positive attitude towards one’s ethnic community and language is a factor which provides for easier and more successful language maintenance. Unlike many immigrant groups, the CRC Dutch did not see themselves as disadvantaged in the period from roughly 1850 to 1910—as they were not—or as victims of injustices from the majority society. They could preserve their language because it was advantageous to them to do so. When it no longer was, due to external pressures in the period of 1910–1930 such as the rise of nativism<sup>10</sup> and a backlash against all immigrant groups, they made a conscious commitment to forsake it. They decided that they no longer needed it to preserve their faith, and they no longer needed it to preserve the core values that they felt made up their “Dutchness.” They came to the same conclusion that the RCA community of Holland, Michigan did in the immediate decades after settlement. Being “Dutch” was about piety, honesty, cleanliness, and intelligence through the promotion of learning and self-sufficiency through hard work and the promotion of industry (Lucas, 1955). The RCA, the CRC now saw, had been able to preserve all of that without the language, and the CRC was now—some seventy years later—ready to do the same.

<sup>8</sup> An Irish variant of the word “creature.” This attestation is notable, as it predates by several decades the first DARE (Dictionary of Regional American English) entry for this word. It means, of course, ‘liquor’. For more discussion on the etymological development of *creature* to mean alcohol and its variants, see Della Volpe and McBroom (1999).

<sup>9</sup> Grand Rapids and the Piedmont of North Carolina competed for the title of “furniture capital” during this time period, and both still claim it.

<sup>10</sup> Anti-immigration bias

The language shift coincides with a general trend toward Americanization. In 1918, looking outward to the American Christian communities for the first time, the CRC affiliated itself with the Federal Council of Christian Churches. In 1920, the CRC launched its first missions, in China and India. The first organ—an instrument that had so long been a symbol of “worldly” Americanism—appeared in a CRC church in 1919 (Van Hinte, 1928). Dutch families who had maintained their linguistic tradition for decades also switched to English in the period from 1915–1930. Jacob van Hinte, a Dutch doctoral student, spent 1921 in America conducting research for what would become his 1928 dissertation, *Nederlanders in Amerika*. He discusses young Dutch women in Grand Rapids, and says they refuse to, or cannot, speak Dutch. Dutch became the language of punishment and the “secret language of parents... children in this kind of setting began to associate the Dutch language with spankings” (Sinke 2002:191). Unfortunately, this is a common phenomenon in language shift generally.

The grave inscriptions of members of the community show the same pattern of Americanization. As noted by this author (2009), Dutch grave inscriptions peaked in the period of 1896–1900. They continued to appear regularly until World War I at which point they disappear, only to re-emerge on two graves in the 1930s which, not coincidentally, belonged to an eighty-two and ninety-seven year old respectively.

4. CONCLUSION. The CRC Dutch were unique in many ways. While other immigrant communities suffered discrimination, a lack of negative stereotypes bolstered CRC Dutch self-confidence. This in turn promoted their belief in self-determination with the primary goals of self-sufficiency and preservation of their faith. The CRC Dutch understood the value of learning English as a means to success, but felt their faith required preservation of the Dutch language. Unlike most immigrant communities which have been described as experiencing bilingualism as a one-generation transitional state, the CRC Dutch cultivated a bilingualism which endured for seventy years. It was this deep, cross-generational and cross-societal bilingualism—integration, as it were—which then allowed the CRC Dutch to shift to a monolingual English-speaking community so rapidly, in the span of a decade, in the 1920s.

Modern immigrant communities face the same challenges and react in as great a range of ways. Ultimately, the goal of this study is not to argue for L1 maintenance or stable bilingualism or for assimilation to the majority L2. Rather, this study challenges the traditional notion that immigrant communities follow a relatively unvarying linguistic three-generational pattern of assimilation. Self-determination, and the place and time in which a community finds itself, are powerful variables and must be taken into consideration in the study of any linguistic community. Scholars revisiting other immigrant communities with this study’s findings in mind are likely to find the linguistic—as well as cultural, religious, and ethnic—situation far more complex and far more intertwined with the society, place, and time than previously suspected.



## REFERENCES

- BRADLEY, DAVID. 2002. Language attitudes: The key factor in language maintenance. In *Language endangerment and language maintenance*, ed. David Bradley & Maya Bradley, 1–10. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- CRAWFORD, JAMES. 1996. Anatomy of the English-Only movement: Social and ideological sources of language restrictionism in the United States. In *Language legislation and linguistic rights*, ed. Douglas Kibbee, 96–122. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- DELLA VOLPE, ANGELA & MICHAEL MCBROOM. A wee dram of the creature: Examining the semantic link between ‘animal’ and ‘alcohol’. *LACUS forum* 25:399–409
- DOEZEMA, LINDA. 1979. *Dutch Americans: A guide to information sources*. Ethnic studies information guides 3. Detroit: Gale Research.
- EDELMAN, HENDRIK. 1986. *The Dutch language press in America: Two centuries of printing, publishing, and bookselling*. Nieuwkoop: De Graaf.
- FISHMAN, JOSHUA. 1989. *Language and ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- LUCAS, HENRY. 1955. *Netherlanders in America: Dutch immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789–1950*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- SINKE, SUZANNE. 2002. *Dutch immigrant women in the United States, 1880–1920*. Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press.
- VANDAM, KARA. 2007a. A study of language identity and shift: The Calvinist Dutch of West Michigan. PhD diss., University of North Carolina.
- . 2007b. A study of language identity and shift: The Christian Reformed Church Dutch of West Michigan. *LACUS forum* 33:497–504.
- . 2009. Dutch-American language shift: Evidence from the grave. *LACUS forum* 34:31–42.
- VAN HINTE, JACOB. 1928, translation 1985. *Netherlanders in America: A study of emigration and settlement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the United States of America*, ed. Robert Swierenga, trans. Adriann de Wit. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.



II



SELECTED  
PAPERS





## EXISTENCE AND EVALUATION: FRENCH *IL* AND *ÇA* IMPERSONALS

MICHEL ACHARD

*Rice University*

THIS PAPER ARGUES that in the context of the French copular complement constructions illustrated in (1)–(4), where the impersonal pronoun *il* ‘it’ and the demonstrative *ça* (*c’ce/cela*) ‘this/that’ are virtually interchangeable<sup>1</sup>, both *il* and *ça* can be analyzed as impersonals.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) *hé là! Sainte Vierge, est-il possible que le bon Dieu veuille faire souffrir ainsi une malheureuse créature humaine?*  
‘Hey! Holy Virgin, is it possible that the Good Lord may want to inflict such suffering on a poor human creature?’ (Proust 1962[1913]:123)
- (2) *est-ce possible que durant toute ma vie terrestre, je n’obtienne jamais un peu de justice?*  
‘Is this [it] possible that during all my life on earth I will never get a little justice?’ (Bloy 1956–1963[1907]:122)
- (3) *Pour la première fois je sentais qu’il était possible que ma mère vécût sans moi*  
‘For the first time I felt it was possible for my mother to live without me’ (Proust 1962[1918]:648)
- (4) *bien sûr que la journée ne se passera pas sans pluie. Ce n’était pas possible que ça reste comme ça, il faisait trop chaud*  
‘Of course the day will not finish without rain. This [it] was simply not possible it would stay like that, it was too hot’ (Proust 1962[1913]:101)

The treatment of the *ça* examples in (2) and (4) as impersonals directly contradicts most analyses found in traditional grammars as well as the syntactic literature, where *il* is uniformly regarded as introducing an impersonal, while *ça*’s presence signals a dislocated construction. Allegedly, *il* functions as a dummy place holder, whose presence merely fulfills the structural requirement that French clauses should have an explicit subject: “Impersonal sentences are constructions in which the subject position is occupied by a dummy pronoun *il*, which does not refer to anything” (Jones 1996:120). On the other hand, *ça* is allegedly a real

---

<sup>1</sup> The two pronouns are also in competition with weather verbs, but these will not be considered in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> *Cela*, *ce*, and *c’* will be treated as variants of *ça*. *Ce* and *c’* precede *être* ‘be’, respectively, when the verb form starts with a consonant and a vowel. Although *cela* can also be found in impersonal contexts, its distribution will not be considered in this paper.

demonstrative which refers to the following clause: "It is postulated that the constructions with *ce* or *ça* are not impersonal constructions, but dislocated constructions analogous to *elle est arrivée, Marie*." The demonstratives are therefore not dummy pronouns, but "referential expressions which refer forward to the finite or infinitival clause" (Jones 1996:128).

Two arguments are usually proposed to structurally distinguish *il* and *ça* constructions. The first one concerns *il*'s presumed lack of meaning, the second one the two pronouns' respective distribution in other contexts. More specifically, since *ça* cannot replace *il* in the other impersonals illustrated in (5) and (6), the two forms must be structurally distinct.

- (5) #*Il/\*ça faut revenir nous voir*  
'You must come back and see us'
- (6) #*Il/\*ça est arrivé deux enfants*  
'There [it] arrived two children'

Neither of these arguments is particularly convincing. First, *il*'s treatment as a necessary dummy place holder doesn't withstand close scrutiny. For one thing, the claim that impersonal pronouns do not refer to anything has been seriously questioned since Bolinger's famous 'ambient it' paper (Bolinger 1973). Following Bolinger's lead, and congruent with the Cognitive Grammar (CG) tradition (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008), the next section shows that *il* is indeed a referential (albeit general) expression. Furthermore, the structural need for a place holding subject in French is equally questionable, since  $\emptyset$  impersonals are not only possible, but the most frequently attested form following certain predicates (see **Table 1** below and note 7). Secondly, the fact that *il* and *ça* are not always interchangeable does not challenge the possibility that *ça* may be an impersonal in one of its senses.

The account presented in this paper emphasizes the commonalities between *il* and *ça* in an effort to capture the intuitive similarity between the constructions illustrated in (1)-(4). Section 1 briefly reviews the CG treatment of impersonals. It further shows that in the specific context of copular complement constructions, *ça* fits the definition, and explores the meaning difference between *il* and *ça*. Section 2 argues that this semantic distinction directly accounts for the distribution of the two pronouns when they are mutually incompatible as well as when they overlap semantically. Section 3 recapitulates the results and concludes the paper. The data on which the analysis is based come from two sources, namely the ARFTL/FRANTEXT database of twentieth-century French texts, and a corpus of journalistic prose composed of approximately 8.5 million words from a series of *Le Monde* articles published between 1989 and 1990. The few manufactured examples are preceded by the # sign.

**1. IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN COGNITIVE GRAMMAR.** In CG, each linguistic expression allows speakers to structure their conceptual content in a particular manner by imposing its own specific structure on it. A particularly significant dimension of construal concerns the selection of the focal elements of the conceptualized scene, i.e., the entities which will be coded as subjects and objects. Expressions which profile relationships con-



fer varying degrees of prominence to their participants. The primary focal participant is called the trajector. The secondary focal participant is called the landmark. At the clausal level, “a subject is characterized as a nominal expression which specifies the trajector of a profiled relationship, and an object as one which specifies a landmark” (Langacker manuscript 2006). Subject selection is a matter of focal prominence. Participants tend to be selected because of their inherent cognitive salience as shown in (7), but speakers possess the linguistic means to focus on whatever aspect of a scene they choose (Langacker 2004, 2008). In particular, they can select the spatial or temporal location where the profiled relation takes place, as in (8), where the sentences present the judgment of a generalized conceptualizer, i.e., anyone in a position to judge what happens within the limited setting of the garden or Houston.

(7) Bees are swarming in the garden (Langacker 2006)

(8) a. The garden is swarming with bees (Langacker 2008)  
b. #Houston has seen its share of political scandals

Impersonals are analyzed as similar constructions, where the pronoun profiles the setting within which the event coded in the complement takes place. They differ from the constructions in (8), however, because that setting doesn't refer to a specific spatial or temporal location, but to a more general and abstract region which Langacker (2006) describes as “the relevant field, i.e., the conceptualizer's scope of awareness for the issue at hand”.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, the scene coded in the complement is not presented as anyone's conceptualization, but made available to any conceptualizer in a position to experience it.

I have proposed elsewhere (Achard 1998, ch. 7; 2009) that *il*'s semantic function is to present the existence or location of an entity in its relevant domain. In (9) for example, the communicative purpose of the sentence is to introduce the existence of an alternative edition of a book unknown to the hearer. *Il* profiles the field, or in other words the scope of awareness within which the entity *une autre [édition]* ‘another one’ can be conceptualized. In this case, this scope represents the section of reality necessary to the conceptualization of the new edition.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Several researchers describe impersonal pronouns in various languages as meaningful but highly abstract. For instance, Bolinger (1977:84) defines English *it* as a “definite nominal with almost the greatest possible generality of meaning”. For others, impersonals represent “general presence or availability” (Kirsner 1979:81 [Dutch]), a “mental space” (Lakoff 1987:542, Smith 2000:489 [German]), an “abstract setting” (Langacker 1993:353), “the abstract setting identifiable as the immediate scope for the existential predication” (Achard 1998, ch. 7 [French]).

<sup>4</sup> The evidence for *il*'s existential function comes from the distribution of predicates in the impersonal construction. Previous research (Hériaux 1980, Achard 2009) has shown that the verbs which consistently occur with impersonal *il* are those that most saliently include the field in their lexical semantic structure, namely *être* ‘be’, *exister* ‘exist’, *venir* ‘come’, *passer* ‘pass’, *rester* ‘stay’, *pousser* ‘grow’, etc. These verbs constitute a good fit with impersonal *il* because the relation they profile involves the interaction between the participants and the field within which the process is observed.

- (9) *le désespéré que vous avez eu tant de peine à vous procurer, dites- vous, est, sans doute, l'édition Soirat. Il en existe une autre qui vient de paraître, à mon insu et sans mon autorisation...*

'The desperate one you say you had such trouble finding is most likely the Soirat Edition. There exists another one which was just released unbeknownst to me and without my permission...' (Bloy, L. *Journal*, 74)

1.1. *ÇA*: FROM DEMONSTRATIVE TO IMPERSONAL. At first glance, a demonstrative pronoun such as *ça* seems like a poor candidate to develop an impersonal sense because of its referential function illustrated in (10):

- (10) *Chose ahurissante: le fauteuil voisin de la dame est occupé par un ours. Celui- ci s'absente quelques instants, à l'entr'acte. Le spectateur en profite: «excusez-moi, dois- je croire mes yeux? C'est un ours qui vous accompagne?»*

'Incredible thing: the seat next to the lady was occupied by a bear. The latter steps outside for a moment, during the intermission. The spectator takes advantage: "Excuse me, can I believe my eyes? It [this] is a bear with you?"' (Gide 1960[1951]:1188)

In (10), the speaker's purpose is to identify (or rather confirm) the category of an unexpected spectator. *Ça*'s referent can unequivocally be identified as the spectator whose category is being confirmed. The pronoun's referent, however, is not always so easily identifiable. A number of researchers (Cadiot 1988, Carlier 1996, Achard 2000) have shown that it is often difficult to identify with precision as in (11), or it can even be general enough to be interpreted as a subsection of reality itself, as illustrated in (12).

- (11) *J'avais gardé de bons copains du temps de l'Opéra, dont un qui était passé chez Cuevas. Il m'a attrapé dans un bar de la rive gauche et m'a conseillé la mode, m'a envoyé présenter mes dessins. A l'époque, je m'habillais beaucoup, j'étais presque un personnage avec des avions, des nuages d'or et d'argent découpés sur le dos de mes blousons. Je ne savais rien, j'ai préparé un dossier, ça a marché. J'ai appris comme ça, et je n'ai pas arrêté.*

'I had kept good friends from the Opéra days, including one who had gone to Cuevas. He caught me in a bar on the left bank and advised me to get into fashion, and sent me to show my drawings. At the time, I would dress up a lot, I was almost a character with cut-outs of planes, and gold and silver clouds in the back of my jackets. I didn't know anything, I prepared a portfolio, it [this] worked out. I learned like that, and I never stopped.' (ACL<sup>5</sup> 47)

- (12) *Et puis, un soir de janvier 1989, le téléphone a sonné. C'est Daniel qui a décroché, là-bas près du canapé rose.» Manuela, quoi Manuela ? - Elle vivait avec un jeune homme. Ça s'est mal passé entre eux. Il l'a tuée. Venez vite. On vous attend."*

'And then, one evening of January 1989, the telephone rang. Daniel picked up,

<sup>5</sup> ACL = Association for Computational Linguistic's 1994 corpus of *Le Monde* newspaper articles.

over there by the pink sofa. “Manuela, what about her? - She was living with a young man. It [this] went sour between them. He killed her. Come quickly. We are waiting for you.” (ACL 750)

In (11) and (12), the demonstrative can still be considered a referential expression, but its referent cannot be located with precision. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to note that in those examples, the pronoun’s referent possesses approximately the same level of generality as the abstract setting the impersonals profile.

It is also important to note that *ça* imposes a particular viewing arrangement on the entity it profiles. As an illustration, consider the example in (13).

- (13) *Les Archaos ont investi le Cirque d’Hiver, et ça fait du vacarme. Ils se déguisent en punks désinvoltes, pratiquent la dérision-déglingue avec une fraîcheur revigorante, en bons enfants des Monty Python et du Magic Circus...*

‘The Archaos have invaded the Cirque d’Hiver, and this makes an uproar. They dress up as carefree punks, poke fun at everything with invigorating freshness, the rightful heirs to Monty Python and Magic Circus...’ (ACL 1120)

Compare the attested form in (13) to the possible alternative *Les Archaos ont investi le Cirque d’Hiver et ils font du vacarme* ‘The Archaos have invaded the Cirque d’Hiver, and they are making an uproar.’ In this alternative, the source of the noise is clearly delineated and identified with the subject *ils* ‘they’, while the conceptualizing subject (the speaker) and the object of conceptualization (the source and production of the noise) are well defined and kept separate. This construal therefore maximizes the asymmetry that naturally exists between the subject and object in the conceptualizing act. In (13) by comparison, the pronoun profiles the field within which the uproar is experienced in an all encompassing manner which includes both the experiencer and the source of the noise, so that neither is individualized or even distinguishable. Because *ça*’s presence blurs the natural asymmetry between the conceptualizing subject (the experiencer) and the object of conceptualization (the source and production of the noise) by treating them both as an undistinguished part of the profiled scene, the pronoun can be said to impose a subjective construal on that scene (Langacker 1985, 1990, Achard 2000). This subjective construal represents a characteristic of *ça* frequently attested in several of its senses, and can also be observed in complement constructions, as illustrated in (14):

- (14) *et toi, mauvais gredin, que je t’y reprenne à courir les routes en faisant le conspirateur! ... ça t’étonne que je t’aie tiré de là, hein?*

‘as for you good-for-nothing scoundrel, don’t let me catch you running around doing mischief! It [this] surprises you I got you out of this doesn’t it?’ (Adam 1903:280)

In (14), the speaker reports the hearer’s surprise at the fact that reality has evolved in a specific way. *Ça* profiles the section of current reality which contains the event or proposi-

tion described in the complement. Because this global subjective construal does not isolate the precise element which creates the surprise, the latter is later objectified and presented in the complement clause. It is important to note that the content of that clause is totally contained in the section of reality *ça* subjectively profiles, even before being objectified and singled out as the specific reason for the hearer's surprise.<sup>6</sup>

Even though *ça* profiles the abstract setting within which the event coded in the complement takes place, the construction in (14) could not be analyzed as impersonal because the construal of the complement scene is specifically tied to the hearer. In copular complement constructions, however, the event/proposition coded in the complement is not exclusively considered with respect to its effect on a specific conceptualizer, but evaluated relative to the general categories of reality (epistemic modals), necessity (deontic modals), or emotion (emotion reaction), usually available to anyone. Because any conceptualizer in the right position will invariably experience the surprise caused by the observation of the scene the complement clause profiles, the construction illustrated in (15) meets the definition of an impersonal. It is semantically very close to the one in (14), but the presence of the copula provides the additional level of generality required of impersonal constructions. It is within this particular context that *ça* can truly be considered an impersonal pronoun.

- (15) *D'ailleurs il n'est pas tout à fait vrai que le chemin de fer ait un tracé aussi raide, aussi indifférent et brutal qu'on veut bien le dire. Ainsi que tu me le faisais remarquer l'an dernier, en haut de La Sèche, c'est étonnant de voir comme il s'est incorporé au paysage.*

'Anyways, it is not quite true that the railroad track cuts such a steep, indifferent and brutish path as people have said. As you were indicating to me last year, at the top of La Sèche, it [this] is surprising to see how well it blends into the landscape.' (Rivière 1930[1914]:28)

The generality of access to the event in the complement the copular complement construction affords is directly responsible for the competition between *il* and *ça* illustrated in the comparison between (15) and (16), since *il* is impossible with the same predicate in the less general construction illustrated in (14).<sup>7</sup>

- (16) *n'est-il pas étonnant que la ruche que nous voyons ainsi confusément, du haut d'un autre monde, nous fasse, au premier regard que nous y jetons, une réponse sûre et profonde?*

'Isn't it surprising that the hive that we see so approximately from the top of another world would give us, as soon as we look at it, such a positive and profound response?' (Maeterlinck 1914[1901]:46)

<sup>6</sup> In this analysis, *ça* is therefore not a cataphoric pronoun (Grevisse 1986) in the strictest sense, since it refers to the field which contains the event or proposition individualized in the complement.

<sup>7</sup> This pattern holds true for most emotion/ reaction and epistemic predicates. Verbal predicates such as *étonner* 'surprise' in (14) can only be accompanied by *ça*, but predicate adjectives found in the copular construction [*être étonnant* 'be surprising' in (15) and (16)] are felicitous with both *il* and *ça*.

	<i>il</i>	<i>ça</i>	Ø	Total
<i>Ennuyeux</i>	2 (6%)	29 (94%)	— (0%)	31 (100%)
<i>Dommage</i>	15 (11%)	37 (27%)	86 (62%)	138 (100%)
<i>Agréable</i>	88 (68%)	42 (32%)	— (0%)	130 (100%)

**Table 1.** Relative distribution of impersonal forms with three emotion reaction predicates in the twentieth century texts of the FRANTEXT database.

To briefly summarize, within the context of copular complement constructions, *il* and *ça* represent two alternative impersonals. As such, both profile the field within which the interaction coded in the complement clause takes place, but *il* presents it objectively, while *ça* imposes a more subjective construal on the same scene. The two impersonals can be further distinguished in terms of their semantic function. *Il* establishes the existence of the event or proposition coded in the complement, while *ça* evaluates it with respect to the general categories of reality, necessity, or emotion. Importantly, all the characteristics of impersonal *ça* can be observed in the pronoun's other senses.

2. DISTRIBUTION OF *IL* AND *ÇA* IMPERSONALS IN THE COPULAR CONSTRUCTION. This section shows that the distribution between *il* and *ça* is directly imputable to their respective meanings described in the previous section. First of all, note that *ça* is impossible with the verbs which profile the existence of an entity (or its appearance on the scene) because the existence of an entity must be established before it can possibly be evaluated. Conversely, the emotion/reaction verbal predicates illustrated in (14) are impossible with *il* because the existence of the proposition in the complement is already established, and thus no longer at issue. Secondly, even in copular complement constructions where *il* and *ça* represent possible alternatives, one must exercise great caution not to generalize too hastily, because the distribution of impersonal forms varies greatly depending on the meaning of individual predicates, even within the same general semantic classes. For example, consider the respective distribution of three impersonal forms (*il*, *ça*, and Ø) with the three emotion/reaction predicates *être agréable* 'be pleasant', *être ennuyeux* 'be annoying', and *être dommage* 'be a pity' presented in Table 1.<sup>8</sup>

Because of the idiosyncrasy of each predicate, this section will simply consider *il* and *ça*'s (*c'*) distribution with the epistemic copular predicate *est vrai* 'is true'. Other predicates also need to be analyzed individually, before any general conclusion can be drawn. The relative frequency of each form is presented in Table 2.

In the impersonal construction, the predicate *vrai* 'true' profiles a proposition which has already been entertained, or that is, at least, potentially available. Consequently, the distinction between stating it, i.e., presenting it with respect to its existence (*il*), or agreeing

<sup>8</sup> The numbers in the two tables in the paper reflect the number of instances attested in the literary corpus alone. Although null (Ø) impersonals are seldom mentioned in the literature, it is interesting to note that they constitute the most frequent form with *dommage* 'pity'. I will not pursue this matter here.

	<i>il</i>		<i>ça</i>		Total	
<i>Vrai</i>	1256	(77.25%)	370	(22.75%)	1626	(100%)

**Table 2.** *Distribution of impersonal forms accompanying the predicate est vrai.*

with it, namely categorizing it as true (*c'*) will be quite subtle at times, which explains why both pronouns can often be used with minimum semantic distinction. This is the case with the example in (17), where *c'* could be used as an alternative to the attested *il* with little difference in meaning.

- (17) *Il me suffira de rappeler comment M. Klein, dans une question relative aux surfaces de Riemann, a eu recours aux propriétés des courants électriques. Il est vrai que les raisonnements de ce genre ne sont pas rigoureux...*  
 'It will be sufficient to remind you how M. Klein, in a question relative to Riemann surfaces, used the properties of electrical current. It is true that such arguments are not rigorous...' (Poincaré 1905:154)

However, this lack of distinction between the pronouns quickly evaporates if the logical relations that exist between the different propositions that constitute a particular passage play a predominant part in its intended reading. For instance, *il* is frequently attested if the proposition it introduces serves to temper a previously made statement by presenting a piece of information that challenges its force. Consider the example in (18) for illustration:

- (18) *À voir cela, il me semble que la révolte est plus loin de nous que je ne croyais d'abord. Il est vrai que je suis avec des montagnards, écartés des centres industriels et très fatalistes.*  
 'When I see this, it seems to me that the rebellion is further from us than I first thought. It is true that I am with mountain men, remote from the industrial centers, and very fatalistic.' (Rivière 1930[1914]:120)

In (18), the proposition *il* presents a piece of information that challenges the generalizing force of the previous statement. The author's earlier position about the state of the rebellion is nuanced by his further consideration of the fatalistic nature of his companions. *Il's* selection is consistent with its meaning described in the previous section because the mere statement of the existence of a fact which runs counter to the overall argument suffices to weaken the latter's scope and power. Conversely, the presence of *c'* would indicate that the proposition in the complement had somehow already been established, and was now being evaluated.<sup>9</sup>

Also consistent with the pronoun's meaning, one of the most frequently attested functions of the proposition *c'* introduces is to express agreement with a previously made

<sup>9</sup> Such a construal with *il* is not impossible, but it would denote a sort of speaker-internal ongoing dialogue.

statement. This is illustrated in (19) and (20). In (19), the content of the proposition that follows the predicate *Farnese était seul* 'Farnese was alone' repeats a section of the preceding discourse verbatim. In (20), the quotes surrounding "*près de mes intérêts*" 'close to my interests' indicate that this very expression was used in a previous letter.

- (19) *je sais: il a tué un pauvre vieil homme sans défense: Farnese était seul,- pas un laquais,- et le coup de revolver a été tiré par derrière. Je sais tout ça.... mais écoutez un peu: ce n'est pas vrai que Farnese était seul.*  
 'I know: he killed a poor defenseless man: Farnese was alone,- not a servant,- and the shot was fired from behind. I know all that...but listen for a minute: It [this] is not true that Farnese was alone.' (Farrère 1924[1907]:280)
- (20) *S'il te faut une confiance perpétuelle sache que tu l'as et que c'est elle qui s'inquiétait quand j'écrivais ma dernière lettre. Mais sache aussi que cette confiance est exigeante et demande qu'on la satisfasse. C'est vrai que je suis « près de mes intérêts ». Plus je vais, plus je veux acquérir.*  
 'If you require everlasting trust, know that you have it and it was that trust getting worried when I wrote my last letter. Be also aware, however, that this trust is demanding and expects to be satisfied. It [this] is true that I am "close to my interests". I want to acquire more and more as time passes.' (Rivière 1930[1914]:207)

If the content expressed in the complement proposition has already been established in the context, and the communicative purpose of the predicate *vrai* 'true' is merely to confirm it, *c'* alone is possible, as the example in (21) shows:

- (21) *Mais je ne prendrai pas un coup, Maria, pas un seul! Il hésita un peu et demanda abruptement, les yeux à terre: - peut-être... vous a-t-on dit quelque chose contre moi? - non. - c'est vrai que j'avais coutume de prendre un coup pas mal, quand je revenais des chantiers et de la drave; mais c'est fini.*  
 'But I won't have a drink, Maria, not a single one! He hesitated a little and asked suddenly, his eyes downcast: - maybe... someone told you something against me didn't they? -no-. - it [this] is true that I used to drink quite a bit when I came back from working or cutting wood; but it's over.' (Hémon 1921[1916]:93)

In (21), the speaker confirms a rumor about himself. *C'*s presence is thus expected. *Il* would be awkward because it would imply the speaker is stating the existence of what is already common knowledge.

The few examples presented in this section suffice to show that the respective meanings of *il* and *ça* account for their distribution in copular complement constructions. It is important to remember, however, that the principles presented here merely constitute tendencies, and that the selection of a specific pronoun remains a matter of construal, and thus ultimately of speaker choice.



3. CONCLUSION. This paper has argued that in the context of the French copular complement construction, both *il* and *ça*, can be analyzed as impersonals. As such, both pronouns profile the field within which the event or proposition coded in the complement takes place, but *il* imposes an objective construal on it, whereas *ça* construes it subjectively from within. Functionally, *il* impersonals present the existence of the event/proposition in the complement, while *ça* impersonals are concerned with its evaluation. This meaning distinction was shown to account for the distribution of the two pronouns in the cases where they are mutually exclusive as well as where their usage overlaps.



## REFERENCES

- ACHARD, MICHEL. 1998. *Representation of cognitive structures: Syntax and semantics of French sentential complements*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- . 2000. French *ça* and the dynamics of reference. *LACUS forum* 27:1–12.
- . 2009. The distribution of French intransitive predicates. *Linguistics* 47(3):513–58.
- ARTFL/FRANTEXT Project. <http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL>.
- Association for Computational Linguistics. 1994. Corpus of text as supplied by *Le Monde* newspaper 1989 and 1990.
- BOLINGER, DWIGHT. 1973. Ambient *it* is meaningful too. *Journal of linguistics* 9:261–70.
- . 1977. *Meaning and form*. London: Longman.
- CADIOT, PIERRE. 1988. De quoi *ça* parle? A propos de la référence de *ça* pronom-sujet. *Le Français moderne* 65:174–92.
- CARLIER, ANNE. 1996. 'Les Gosses *ça* se lève tôt le matin': L'interprétation générique du syntagme nominal disloqué au moyen de *ce* ou *ça*. *Journal of French language studies* 6:133–62.
- GREVISSE, MAURICE. 1986. *Le bon usage*, 12th ed. Paris: Duculot.
- HÉRIAU, MICHEL. 1980. Le verbe impersonnel en français moderne. Lille: Atelier de reproductions de thèses, Université de Lille III.
- JONES, MICHAEL A. 1996. *Foundations of French syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KIRSNER, ROBERT. 1979. *The problem of presentative sentences in Modern Dutch*. North-Holland Linguistic Series 43. Amsterdam: North-Holland.
- LAKOFF, GEORGE. 1987. *Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LANGACKER, RONALD W. 1985. Observations and speculations on subjectivity. In *Iconicity in syntax*, ed. John Haiman, 109–50. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- . 1987. *Foundations of cognitive grammar*. vol. 1. *Theoretical prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 1990. Subjectification. *Cognitive linguistics* 1:5–38.



- . 1991. *Foundations of cognitive grammar*. vol. 2. *Descriptive application*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 1993. Grammatical traces of some “invisible” semantic constructs. *Language sciences* 15:323–55.
- . 2004. Aspect of the grammar of finite clauses. In *Language, culture, and mind*, ed. Michel Achard & Suzanne Kemmer, 535–77. Stanford: CSLI.
- . 2006. On the subject of impersonals (unpublished ms.).
- . 2008. *Cognitive grammar: A basic introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- SMITH, Michael. 2000. Cataphors, spaces, propositions: Cataphoric pronouns and their function. *Proceedings of the meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society* 36(1):483–500.



## SOURCES

- ADAM, PAUL. 1902. *L'enfant d'Austerlitz*. Paris: Ollendorff.
- BLOY, LÉON. 1956–1963[1900]. *Journal*. Paris: Mercure de France.
- . 1956–1963[1907]. *Journal*, vol. 2. Paris: Mercure de France.
- FARRÈRE, CLAUDE. 1924[1907]. *L'homme qui assassina*. Paris: Flammarion.
- GIDE, ANDRÉ. 1960. [1951]. *Ainsi soit-il*. In *Journal*, vol. 2. Paris: Gallimard.
- HÉMON, LOUIS. 1921[1916]. *Maria Chapdelaine: récit du Canada français*. Paris, Grasset, 1921.
- MAETERLINCK, MAURICE. 1914[1901]. *La vie des abeilles*. Paris: Fasquelle.
- POINCARÉ, HENRI. 1905. *La valeur de la science*. Paris: Flammarion.
- PROUST, MARCEL. 1962[1913]. *Du côté de chez Swann*. In *À la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 1, ed. P. Clarac & A. Ferre. Paris: Gallimard.
- . 1962[1918]. *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. In *À la recherche du temps perdu*, vol. 1, ed. P. Clarac & A. Ferre. Paris: Gallimard.
- RIVIÈRE, H. 1930[1914]. *Correspondance avec J. Rivière*. Paris: Gallimard.





## ASPECT AND EXPRESSIONS OF HABITUALITY IN POLISH

BARBARA BACZ  
*Université Laval, Canada*

ACCORDING TO STANDARD DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS, the word *habit* refers to “a way of acting fixed through repetition” (Merriam-Webster’s On-line Dictionary, accessed May 31, 2008), and the attributive adjective *habitual* means “regular, usual, done constantly or as a habit” (Hornby 1989:559), “resorted to on a regular basis” (Merriam-Webster, *ibid.*). Thus, *expressions of habituality* in the present paper refer to phrases containing verbs which denote repeated actions, compatible with overt (or implied) adverbials of frequency, such as *every day, usually, regularly, always, sometimes*, etc. The stock example of such “habituals”, examined in several Slavic languages, first by Mønnesland (1984:61) and then by Dickey (2000:52–53), is the sentence *He drinks a glass of vodka every day* in example (1). As illustrated by the Czech ((1)a), Russian ((1)b) and Polish ((1)c) equivalents of this sentence, the single ‘accomplishment’ (Vendler 1957) situation of drinking a glass of vodka daily is coded by different aspectual forms of the verb *drink* in different Slavic languages: Czech regularly accepts the perfective (pf), while Russian and Polish prefer the imperfective (impf):

- (1) a. **Vypije**<sup>P</sup> jednu skleničku vodky denně. [Cz]  
‘He drinks one glass of vodka a day.’  
b. *Každyj den*’ on \***vyp’et**<sup>P</sup> / **vypivaet**<sup>I</sup> po odnoj rjumke vodki. [Ru]  
c. *Codziennie* \***wypije**<sup>P</sup> / **wypija**<sup>I</sup> kieliszek wódki. [Pol]

According to the east-west theory of Slavic aspect promoted by some slavists (see Dickey 2000, 2005), non-uniform aspectual coding of identical verbal situations in expressions of habituality across Slavic is one of the parameters defining a given language as aspectually eastern or western. According to Dickey (2000:53–54), “a western group of languages (Czech, Slovak, Slovene and Serbo-Croatian) regularly allow the pf in cases of single and repeated accomplishments and achievements in the present tense; an eastern group (Polish, Russian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian) generally prohibit the pf, requiring the impf instead.” In this paper I will take issue with that generalization with respect to Polish. An examination of Polish data allowing perfectivity in expressions of habituality suggests that Polish not only does not prohibit the pf in expressions denoting repeated activities, but tends to prefer it in certain habitual contexts. The analysis of Polish habitual data presented here supports the hypothesis, advanced by Bacz (2007) on the basis of morphological evidence from *s*-prefixation, that on the aspectual map of Slavic, Polish, which has been shown to have a transitional aspectual status (Dickey 2005), should be placed closer to the western than the eastern group of languages.

1. DATA CLASSIFICATION. When examining habitual expressions in Slavic it is important to distinguish between habitual events which occur on their own, i.e., are not conditioned on (or correlated with) other repeated events (such as the single-event habitual activity of drinking a glass of vodka daily in (1)) and habitual events that are part and parcel of a sequence or succession of verbal situations<sup>1</sup>. Typical examples of sequentially related habitual situations ("habitual-pair constructions" in Bondarko's (1971) terminology) are syntactically complex sentences, such as (2)a and (2)b, both from Polish, with temporal and frequentative subordinators such as: *kiedy (tylko)* 'whenever', (*zawsze*) *gdy* '(always) when', *gdy/ jak tylko* 'as soon as', *wtedy kiedy* 'at the times when', etc.:

- (2) a. *Gdy/jak tylko wypije<sup>P</sup>/\* wypija<sup>i</sup> kieliszek wina, zaraz poprawia<sup>i</sup> mu się humor.*  
 'As soon as he drinks a glass of wine, his mood ameliorates [immediately].'  
 b. *Porządny obiad zje<sup>P</sup> tylko wtedy, kiedy przychodzi<sup>i</sup> do nas w odwiedziny.*  
 'He eats a decent dinner only [at the times] when he comes to us for a visit.'

Examples of habitual events in succession ("habitual-chain constructions" in Dickey 2000) are found in narrative contexts, i.e., in sentences or texts with typically more than two predicates, as in example (3):

- (3) *Często po obiedzie usiadzie<sup>P</sup> sobie w fotelu, zapali<sup>P</sup> fajkę i porozmawia<sup>P</sup> z wnukami.*  
 'Often after dinner he sits down [*sobie*] in an armchair, lights up his pipe and has a chat with the grandchildren.'

A distinction between single-event and multiple-event habituals needs to be made because the aspectual coding of similar habitual situations occurring on their own as opposed to those occurring in the context of other events is not the same, as evidenced by the impf vs. pf difference in the verb for 'drink' in (1)c and (2)a: in the single-event context of (1)c, the impf *wypija* 'drinks up' is the only acceptable form; in the adverbial clause with the temporal subordinate conjunction *gdy tylko* 'as soon as' of (2)a, however, the pf *wypije* 'drinks' is the only possibility.

When examining Slavic habituals, it is also necessary to distinguish between expressions of habituality with predicates in the present versus those in the past tense. The data considered in this paper are restricted to habitual expressions in the grammatical present tense.

2. DATA ANALYSIS. The ten examples under analysis contain three types of verbs distinguished according to Vendler's (1957) popular, though not perfect (see Bogdan & Sullivan 2008), classification of verbal situations, initially proposed for English: activities (dancing, sitting and sleeping in (4) and (5)), accomplishments (drinking wine and eating bananas in (6)), and achievements (expressed by the action verbs of happening in (7)). They represent six different uses of the pf in single and multiple-event expressions of habituality in Polish:

<sup>1</sup> For lack of terminological inventiveness on my part, I am using the terms *event* and *verbal situation* interchangeably with reference to activities, actions, processes, states, etc. denoted by the verb.

(1) habitual activities of limited duration, (2) habitual accomplishments expressing ability, (3) correlated habitual achievements expressing possibility and probability, (4) generalized statements in habitual sequences with no time reference, (5) habitual sequences with time reference, (6) habitual uses with reference to the future in wishes, suggestions and advice.

2.1. HABITUAL ACTIVITIES OF LIMITED DURATION. It is a well known fact that in all Slavic languages, the impf is the preferred aspect in situations of habitual activities, i.e., when the verb expresses an open-ended (no time limit), atelic (no goal) process (Dickey 2000:52), such as dancing every night in the equivalent Russian and Polish examples (4) a and (4)b:

- (4) a. Oni **tancujut**<sup>i</sup> *każdyj* večer. [Ru]  
 'They dance every evening.' (Dickey 2000:52)  
 b. **Tańczą**<sup>i</sup> co wieczora. [Pol]

It happens, however, that activities in habitual contexts are viewed as totalities and are, therefore, expressed by perfective verbs. One situation in which a habitual activity is viewed as a totality is represented by the case of delimitatives. Delimitatives denote activities of limited duration and are usually expressed by the *po*-prefixed perfective verbs, such as *potaćńczyć* 'dance for a while', *posiedzieć* 'sit for a while', *poczytać* 'read a little', etc. Dickey (2000:52, fn. 4) observes that activities expressed by delimitative verbs in habitual contexts (and therefore viewed as totalities) are characteristic of "aspectually western languages" (my emphasis). His example of such western usage of the delimitative pf denoting the activity of sitting comes from Slovene (Sn) and is quoted in (5):

- (5) a. *Pogosto* **posidi**<sup>p</sup> kakšnih pet minut. [Sn]  
 'He *often* sits [there] for five or so minutes.' (Dickey 2000:52)

Polish, which has been classed with the eastern languages, can also view habitual activities as totalities and express them by means of delimitative perfectives. What is more, while Slovene delimitative perfectives denoting habitual activities seem to require the presence of an adverbial of limited duration (Dickey, *ibid.*), parallel activity habituals in Polish can occur without such an adverbial. While the delimitative perfective *posiedzieć* 'sit for a while' in example (5)b expresses a habitual activity (see the frequency adverbial *codziennie* 'every day') and is accompanied by an overt adverbial of limited duration (*przez godzinę lub dwie* 'for an hour or two'), the verb *pospać* 'sleep for a while' in example (5)c needs no duration adverbial:

- (5) b. *Codziennie* **posiedzi**<sup>p</sup> (sobie) w ogródku przez godzinę lub dwie. [Pol]  
 'Every day he po-sits [*sobie*] in the garden for an hour or two.'  
 c. *Codziennie/ Często* **pośpi**<sup>p</sup> sobie po obiedzie.  
 'Every day/ often he po-sleeps [*sobie*] after dinner.'

It should be noticed that the habitual activities in (5)b and (5)c can also be expressed by the simple (unprefixed and non-reflexive) imperfectives *siedzi*, *śpi* with no change in the context [*Codziennie **siedzi** (sobie) w ogródku przez godzinę lub dwie* ‘Every day he sits (*sobie*) in the garden for an hour or two; *Często śpi (sobie) po obiedzie* ‘He often sleeps (*sobie*) after dinner’] The use of the pf, however, makes these expressions of habituality more colloquial and stylistically more graphic. It is important to notice the occurrence of the reflexive pronoun *sobie* in habitual situations such as (5)b and (5)c. The reflexive dative *sobie* accompanying the predicate verb is a feature of spoken Polish. Typically, it is added to communicate the subject’s feeling of satisfaction with the performed activity and is well compatible with the pf aspect. (For a thorough cognitive analysis of the various uses of *sobie* see Rudzka-Ostyn 1992.)

- (5) d. Na obozie harcerskim **zawsze *wytańczyć się***<sup>P</sup> do syta.  
 ‘At a scouts’camp I *always wytańczy* [“dance myself out”] until I’ve had enough.’

The habitual activity of frequent (presumably daily) dancing at a scouts’ camp (We know that such camps are organized every summer and that dancing parties are held almost every night) invoked in example (5)d is communicated by a reflexive perfective with the reflexive particle *się* ‘oneself’ (*wytańczyć się do syta* ‘dance until satisfied’). The structure expresses the idea of saturation with the performed activity (Bartnicka & Satkiewicz 2000:273). The reflexive pf in this example is a specific kind of a delimitative whose end limit is defined by the point of saturation with the activity. The reflexive pf *wytańczy się* in sentence (5)d can be substituted by the *po*-prefixed pf with *sobie* (*potaćnęć sobie*) without affecting the expression’s habitual and delimitative senses. The limit of the activity’s duration is expressed here by the prefix *wy-* (in combination with the reflexive *się*). The presence of an adverbial of limited duration (*do syta* ‘until satisfied’, *do upadłego* ‘until the moment of collapsing’, etc.) is optional.

In habitual-activity contexts, the use of the impf could be qualified as pragmatically neutral (mere communication of repeated occurrence) while the use of the pf could be considered stylistically marked for it includes an expression of the speaker-subject’s emotional attitude towards the repetition. In any case, however, examples (5)b, c, d show that both aspectual forms are possible with Polish activity verbs in habitual contexts, so Polish should not be described as different from Slovene in this respect, and its “eastern”-like aspectual classification should be reconsidered.

2.2. HABITUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS EXPRESSING ABILITY. To express single-event habitual accomplishments, Polish decidedly favours the impf, as evidenced by example (1) c, repeated here as (6)a, where the impf is the only acceptable possibility:

- (6) a. *Codziennie \*wypije<sup>P</sup> / wypija<sup>I</sup> kieliszek wódki.* [Pol]  
 ‘He drinks a glass of vodka *every day*.’

However, the pf form of an accomplishment verb can occur in single-event habituals when in addition to denoting a repeated occurrence of an event, the expression imparts informa-

tion about the subject's ability to perform an accomplishment act in question on a regular basis, as in examples (6)b and (6)c:

- (6) b. Janek **wypije**<sup>p</sup> skrzynkę piwa *na tydzień*.  
 'Janek drinks [is capable of drinking]/ will drink a case of beer *a week*.'  
 c. Moje dziecko **zje**<sup>p</sup> całego banana *dziennie*.  
 'My baby eats [can consume]/ will eat a whole banana *a day*.'

The presupposition in (6)b is that normally, Janek does not empty a case of beer in a week, but he is capable of drinking that much and can perform the act of drinking that much regularly. The use of the pf here can be interpreted as a general statement about Janek (a kind of 'general truth' about his ability to drink). Sentence (6)c could be uttered by a young mother proud of her baby's eating habits in a conversation with another mother whose baby is not a good eater. The possessive adjective *moje* 'my' would likely receive heavy contrastive stress to emphasize the difference in the eating behaviour of the two babies. The impf forms *wypija* and *zjada* in the habitual contexts of (6)b and (6)c are of course possible. They would convey the sense of habituality but would not communicate the idea of the subject's ability to perform the activity regularly, which is implied by the use of the pf. Technically speaking, examples like (6)b and (6)c are single-event habituals for they contain one predicate and cooccur with typical frequency adverbs. Yet, since they are normally found in the spoken language, pragmatic presuppositions implied by the context of conversation have to be taken into account in an analysis of their verbs' aspect. A definition restricting single-event habituals to isolated sentences may have to be modified to include pragmatic aspects of conversational usage.

2.3. HABITUAL ACHIEVEMENTS WITH VERBS OF HAPPENING EXPRESSING POSSIBILITY AND PROBABILITY. Discussing the choice of aspect in Slavic habituals denoting actions (which are included in the class of Vendlerian achievements), Dickey (2000:54, fn.6) mentions a 'western' usage of the present pf in the habitual expression from Lower Sorbian quoted in (7)a:

- (7) a. *Nowy Casnik* rozpšawja<sup>i</sup> wo *wšyknom*, co<sup>ž</sup>se we Łužycy **stanjo**<sup>p</sup>. [Sor]  
 'The *Nowy Casnik* [*New Times*] reports *everything* that happens in Lusatia.'  
 (Dickey 2000:54, fn.6)

In the parallel Polish context (with the pf achievement verb *wydarzyć się* 'happen'), it is perfectly possible to use the pf as well, as shown in example (7)b<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>2</sup> In the context of (7)b the impf *wydarza się* seems to me a bit less likely, but possible. With the verb *dziać się*, a different Polish equivalent of *happen*, however, the present impf *dzieje się* is the only acceptable option, clearly because *dziać się* does not have a pf counterpart. With *zachodzić*, another verb of happening meaning 'go on', both aspectual forms are possible in the context of (7)b, but the pf *zajdzie* is the preferred one in my idiolect.

- (7) b. Gazeta Torontońska opisuje *wszystko*, co **wydarzy się**<sup>p</sup> /?wydarza się<sup>i</sup> w mieście.  
'The Toronto Gazette describes *everything* that happens [should happen] in the city.'

While the impf *wydarza się* in (7)b focuses on the various things actually happening in the city, the pf *wydarzy się* refers to things that might happen in the future or might have already happened. The pf form has no definite time reference and in a general way designates whatever might happen at any time. Therefore, the sense of the present pf here is similar to the modal-like ability interpretation of examples (6)b and (6)c. A possible translation of the pf in the expression *wszystko, co wydarzy się* in (7)b is 'whatever might happen'. Additional evidence for the modality interpretation of such pf verbs of happening in the present tense comes from the fact that they can be substituted by the conditional forms with the particle *-by*, in an optional negative context: *co(kolwiek) by się (nie) wydarzyło* 'what(ever) might/would (not) happen' or the *by*-hypothetical expressions with the verb 'to have', such as *miatoby* 'were to': *cokolwiek miatoby się wydarzyć* 'whatever should happen', with no significant change in the sentence's interpretation. The context of the expression is considered habitual because of the idea of repetition which is present in the meaning of the quantifiers *cokolwiek, wszystko co* 'everything, whatever', which are semantically parallel to *any, all* and *every* in English. (See Langacker 1997 for a discussion of habituality of these quantifiers).

In fact, it should be observed that the habitual events denoted by the pfs in (7)a and in (7)b cannot be described as 'single' because the verbs of happening occur in subordinate clauses and are therefore correlated with (i.e., dependent on) the verb in the main clause, which would most likely be a verb of saying (*opisuje* 'describes', *opowiada* 'relates', *donosi* 'informs', etc.) or a verb expressing the subject's interest and involvement in what is happening (*interesuje się* 'is interested in', *zajmuje się* 'is involved in', *cieszy się* 'is happy', *martwi się* 'is worried', etc.).

To sum up the discussion of examples (6)b, (6)c, and (7)b, it can be said that they show, just as the Polish examples in (4) and (5), that in Polish, habitual achievements and accomplishments can be viewed as totalities, a fact which calls for a revision of the aspectual categorization of Polish as an eastern language.

2.4. HABITUAL SEQUENCES IN GENERAL STATEMENTS WITH NO TIME REFERENCE. The meaning of probability characterizing the habitual use of the pf with verbs of happening (example (7)b) is also present in the colloquial use of the pf in habitual sequences expressing general statements (which by definition have no specific time reference), illustrated by example (8)a. This observation is confirmed by the fact that the present tense form in these examples can be easily substituted by the hypothetical future-in-the past form with the particle *(-)by* 'would' (see example (8)b) with no change in the expression's meaning.

- (8) a. *Co jej (nie) kupię*, to zawsze **narzeka**.  
'Whatever I buy [lit. "will not buy"] her, she always complains.'



- (8) b. *Co bym jej (nie) kupił, to zawsze narzeka.*  
 ‘Whatever [no matter what] I buy [lit. “would not buy”] her, she always complains.’

In colloquial sequences of this type, the correlated events are linked by subordinating conjunctions implying habitual occurrence (which refer to time or to space), such as *gdzie nie* ‘where not’, *co nie* ‘what not’, *gdziekolwiek (nie)* ‘wherever (not)’, *zawsze kiedy* ‘always when’, *tyko wtedy kiedy* ‘only when’, etc. The negative particle *nie*, frequently encountered in colloquial speech, is frowned at by language purists who consider negative structures such as (8)a and (8)b as a calque from Russian (*rusycyzm*). A fully acceptable example (with slight modifications) of the habitual structure under discussion taken from Miodek (2005) is quoted in (8)c:

- (8) c. *Gdziekolwiek /Gdzie tylko spojrzeć<sup>p</sup>, wszędzie rosna<sup>i</sup> nowe domy.*  
 ‘Anywhere (wherever only) you look, new houses are growing all around.’ (Miodek 2005:220)

Examples (8)a and (8)b belong to the habitual-pair constructions with temporal clauses illustrated in (2)a and (2)b; in both sets of examples the habitual sequences of events are correlated in time and iconic: the verb in the subordinate clause denotes an event temporally prior to the event in the main clause whose occurrence is typically a condition for the occurrence of the main clause event. In the habitual-pair “Whenever-A-then-B” sequences of (2) and (8), the pf-verb event in the subordinate clause is viewed as a totality on its every occurrence in a series of repetitions. The main clause event, occurring in tandem with the conditioning event in the subordinate clause, is also part of the repeated series.

In sequences expressing correlated habitual events where the habitual expression takes the form of a generalized statement with no specific time reference, such as examples (8)a and (8)b as well as the pf infinitive in (8)c, the main clause event has to be expressed by the impf, and the expression as a whole could again be classified as a specific type of “general truth”.

2.5. HABITUAL SEQUENCES WITH TIME REFERENCE. Habitual sequences with pairs of correlated events, such as those represented by example (2)b, repeated below as (9), can refer to the past, the present or the future. They are part of standard Polish (not necessarily colloquial) and express a type of a common conditional sequence. In (9), which describes a present habit, all combinations of aspect are possible: pf-pf, impf-impf, pf-impf, impf-pf, with no meaning change of any significance:

- (9) Porządny obiad **zje<sup>p</sup> / zjada<sup>i</sup>** tylko wtedy, kiedy **przyjdzie<sup>p</sup> / przychodzi<sup>i</sup>** do nas w odwiedzin.  
 ‘He eats a decent dinner *only* [at the times] when he comes to us for a visit.’

2.6. HABITUAL USES WITH REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE IN WISHES, SUGGESTIONS, INSTRUCTIONS AND ADVICE. The set of examples in (10), with the pf in the present tense, features single-event habitual expressions with accomplishment verbs (*pić* ‘drink some-

thing', *przynieść* 'bring something') occurring in wishes, suggestions, advice and instructions. Sentence (10)a could easily be uttered by a doctor giving advice on what the patient should drink on a regular basis to improve the functioning of her kidneys:

- (10) a. Niech mama *codziennie wypije*<sup>p</sup> szklankę soku żurawinowego.  
'Make your mom drink [your mom should drink] a glass of cranberry juice *every day*.'

The habitual expression with the pf *przynieść* 'bring' in (10)b comes from a printed text I found on a greeting card with nameday wishes:

- (10) b. Niech *każdy dzień przyniesie*<sup>p</sup> Ci radość i zadowolenie.  
'May *every day* bring you joy and satisfaction.'

Both (10)a and (10)b refer to hypothetical future by definition, so the impf is perfectly possible here (In fact, *pije*<sup>i</sup> or *wypija*<sup>i</sup> in (10)a and *przynosi*<sup>i</sup> in (10)b would be more common than their pf counterparts). One could perhaps argue that habitual events expressed by the pf in imperative-optative constructions with *niech* 'let, may', such as (10)a and (10)b, denote actions that are limited in duration: just as the future does not last forever, they cannot be repeated forever. The pf makes the wishes and the instructions more punctual, emphasizing the accomplishment of the event viewed in its totality rather than the repetition.

3. CONCLUSION. An extensive data analysis is needed to explain all possible aspectual combinations in Polish expressions of habituality. The few examples of the habitual use of the present-tense pf considered here provide sufficient evidence, however, to show that Polish does not "prohibit the pf in habitual contexts", and that considering the habituality parameter in the aspectual classification of Slavic, it could be characterized as a language close to the western group.



## REFERENCES

- BACZ, BARBARA. 2007. S-/Z- prefixation and aspect in Polish. In *Cognition in language*, ed. W. Chłopicki, M. Gibińska-Marzec, J. Ozga, A. Pawelec, & A. Pokojka, 85–106. Kraków: Tertium.
- BARTNICKA, BARBARA & HALINA SATKIEWICZ. 2000. *Gramatyka języka polskiego. Podręcznik dla cudzoziemców*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
- BOGDAN, D. & W. J. SULLIVAN. 2008. Tense and aspect in Polish: A discourse and cognitive approach (manuscript).
- BONDARKO, A. V. 1971. *Vid i vremja russkogo glagola*. Leningrad.
- DICKEY, STEPHEN M. 2000. *Parameters of Slavic aspect. A cognitive approach*. Stanford CA: CSLI.

- . 2005. *S-/Z-* and the grammaticalization of aspect in Slavic. *Slovene linguistic studies* 5:3–55.
- HORNBY, ALBERT .S. 1989. *Oxford advanced learners' dictionary*, 4th ed., ed. A.P. Cowie. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- LANGACKER, RONALD. 1997. Generics and habituals. In *On conditionals again*, ed. A. Athanasiadou & R. Dirven, 191–222. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- MIODEK, JAN. 2005. *Słownik ojczyzny polszczyzny*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Europa.
- MØNNESLAND, SVEIN. 1984. The Slavonic frequentative habitual. In *Aspect bound*, ed. C. de Groot & H. Tommola, 53–76. Dordrecht: Foris.
- RUDZKA-OSTYN, BRYGIDA. 1992. Case relations in cognitive grammar: Some reflexive uses of the Polish dative. *Leuvense bijdragen* 81:327–73.
- VENDLER, ZENO. 1957. Verbs and times. *The philosophical review* 66:143–60.





# THE PERCEPTION OF LINGUISTIC AND NONLINGUISTIC INPUTS: THE CASE OF ROAD SIGNS

DAVID BOWIE

*University of Alaska Anchorage*

JEANNE M. BOWIE

*University of Central Florida*

THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF STUDIES INVESTIGATING DIFFERENCES in the perception of linguistic and nonlinguistic inputs. These studies have taken many different forms, focusing on phenomena as diverse as infant reactions to sounds, the effects of brain injuries, and dichotic listening experiments (for some early examples, see Catlin & Neville 1976; Jusczyk *et al.* 1977; Morse 1972; Oscar-Berman, Goodglass & Donnenfeld 1974; Soderquist & Hoenigmann 1973; Wood, Goff & Day 1971, among many others), but they have generally found that there are differences in the way humans process, for example, a word as opposed to a bird's chirp. In nearly all cases, however, these look at reactions to linguistic inputs as they are generally found in the ordinary course of hearing language as compared to parallel nonlinguistic stimuli.<sup>1</sup> However, there are many cases in which linguistic stimuli are encountered in other situations, and in this paper we focus on one of these: road signs.

1. ROAD SIGNS. Road signs are generally standardized along four dimensions to offer information to motorists: shape, color, symbols, and text (Hawkins 1992; Federal Highway Administration 2007). Three of these four are nonlinguistic, and all road signs do in fact contain nonlinguistic information, because all of them are differentiated into categories through the use of shape and color, which then have symbols, text, or both added to specify the particular sign within that category. **Figure 1** (overleaf), for example, shows three road signs that contain no linguistic information: from left to right, a SCHOOL CROSSING sign, a NO RIGHT TURN sign, and a PEDESTRIAN CROSSING sign.<sup>2</sup>

In **Figure 2** (overleaf), on the other hand, we see four signs that contain both linguistic and non-linguistic information. From left to right, the STOP and SPEED LIMIT signs are dif-

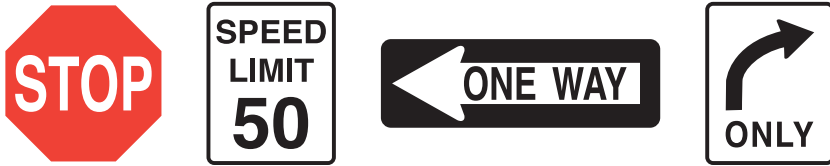
---

<sup>1</sup> Some similar effects have been found for visual stimuli. For reports of studies that explicitly compare linguistic and visual processing, see Yund, Uno & Woods 1999 and the survey in Polka, Jusczyk & Rvachew 1995; for a more general discussion of the combination of linguistic and non-linguistic material into multimodal texts, see O'Toole 1994 and Kress & van Leeuwen 2001.

<sup>2</sup> To easily distinguish between the name of a sign and descriptions of those signs or their contents, we have placed the colloquial names for the road signs we discuss in small caps, so that a STOP sign is a red octagon containing the word *stop*. We caution that some colloquial names for signs are somewhat ambiguous as to content—for example, a SLIPPERY WHEN WET sign is always a diamond, but may be yellow or orange (depending on whether it's in a construction zone or not) and can contain either the words *slippery when wet* or a symbol denoting the same—but this does not cause a problem for the signs we focus on in this paper. Note that all signs in actual use that are discussed in this paper are outlined in detail in Federal Highway Administration 2007.



**Figure 1.** Three road signs containing only nonlinguistic information.



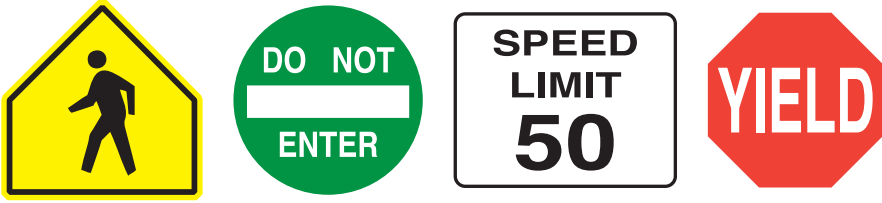
**Figure 2.** Four road signs containing both linguistic and nonlinguistic information.

ferentiated by shape and color (a red octagon for the STOP sign, a black-bordered white vertical rectangle for the SPEED LIMIT sign), but also contain text (including, in the case of the SPEED LIMIT sign, numbers). The ONE WAY and RIGHT TURN ONLY signs are also defined by shape and color (respectively, a black-bordered horizontal arrow and a black-bordered white vertical rectangle) and contain text, but they also contain symbols (a large white arrow on the ONE WAY sign and a black right turn arrow on the RIGHT TURN ONLY sign).

None of this is terribly surprising, of course. Neither is it surprising that some of these elements consistently go together: A STOP sign, for example, is always octagonal and red, and (in most of the English-speaking world) contains the word *stop*. In other cases, the connections are not as consistent: a diamond-shaped sign, to use one specific case, may be yellow, orange, or yellow-green, and may have any number of symbols or words on it, depending on the particular situation a motorist in that area is likely to face. However, even in cases lacking such consistency, there are still limits: A diamond-shaped sign, for example, is never red, nor can it ever contain phrases such as *speed limit* or *go*. Similarly, signs reading *stop* are never colored green, and the word *yield* never appears on pentagonal signs.<sup>3</sup>

2. ISSUES AND METHODOLOGY. The design of road signs is particularly important when one considers that it has an impact on public safety—if drivers can't properly interpret the content of road signs, then safety is impacted negatively, because drivers are likely to do the wrong thing in response. In fact, some of the redundancy in road signs was designed with

<sup>3</sup> All of these descriptions are based on the conventions for road signs as they are found in the United States. Other jurisdictions have different norms for road signs, of course, but since the respondents to our survey (as we discuss elsewhere in the paper) had nearly all driven only in the United States, we have opted to keep our focus here and elsewhere on the signs they have regularly come in contact with.



**Figure 3.** Nonstandard road signs differing from standard signs in shape, color, symbol, or text.

this in mind. For example, downward-pointing triangles are only ever used for YIELD signs so that even if the word *yield* and the red border on the sign becomes illegible (perhaps due to vandalism or fading from exposure to sunlight) motorists can still recognize it as a YIELD sign (Hawkins 1992). Given all of this redundancy, though, we are led to five basic questions:

1. Are linguistic and nonlinguistic components of road signs interpreted differently?
2. For signs with both linguistic and nonlinguistic elements, can the perception of the linguistic components be overridden by nonlinguistic ones, or vice versa?
3. Do drivers know what combinations of color, shape, symbol, and text actually exist on road signs?
4. Does the internal redundancy of road signs reduce confusion?
5. How can road signs be improved for safety?

Our ultimate goal, naturally enough, is finding an answer to (5). However, before getting to that in any meaningful way we need to be able to answer the others; since the study we present here is an initial pilot study, we focus primarily on questions (1) and (2).

To answer these questions, we conducted a survey of individuals' interpretations of road signs. The survey consisted of eighty-eight road signs, some of which were standard road signs in actual use while others were based on standard road signs but with their shape, color, symbol, or text altered. Examples of some of these non-standard signs are given in **Figure 3**: from left to right, a SPEED LIMIT sign that has a horizontal rectangle shape instead of a vertical rectangle, a DO NOT ENTER sign that is green instead of red, a SCHOOL CROSSING sign with the standard symbol replaced with the symbol from a PEDESTRIAN CROSSING sign, and a STOP sign that reads *yield* instead of *stop*.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the survey included what we call "blank" signs. Since all of the standard road signs we included in our survey always contain symbols or words, we presented versions of them that did not include such content, as well as versions of the non-standard signs we used without content. Examples of these are given in **Figure 4** (overleaf): from left

<sup>4</sup> Because of the highly redundant nature of road signs, of course, some of these could be analyzed differently. For example, among the nonstandard signs in **Figure 3**, the yellow pentagon could be analyzed as a PEDESTRIAN CROSSING sign in a pentagonal instead of a diamond shape, and the red octagon as a YIELD sign using an octagon instead of a downward-pointing triangle. This ambiguity is ultimately unimportant for the discussion at this point, however.



**Figure 4.** Examples of blank signs used in the survey.

to right, a STOP sign without the word *stop*, a ONE WAY sign without the phrase *one way*, a green (rather than red) version of a YIELD sign without the word *yield*, and a black (rather than red) version of a DO NOT ENTER sign omitting the phrase *do not enter*. Of these, the first two are blank versions of standard signs, while the last two are blank versions of non-standard signs presented elsewhere in the study.

The survey respondents were presented with all eighty-eight signs in the survey in a random order, except that the blank signs were presented before the signs with symbolic or linguistic content.<sup>5</sup> This was done because the symbols and words used on the signs with such content were limited to only a few possibilities, and (in case symbolic or linguistic information could alter perceptions of the meaning of the shapes and colors of the signs) we wanted to avoid the danger of preconditioning the respondents' reactions by initial exposure to such content.

For all of the road signs (standard, nonstandard, and blank) in the survey, the respondents were individually presented with an image on a computer screen and asked to give the meaning of the sign, where the sign would be found, and whether the sign was a real road sign. The last of these was answered by respondents checking radio buttons, but the first and second were free response items. Questions could be skipped (although the respondents were not directly informed of this fact), but once skipped or answered the questions could not be revisited. The respondents were allowed as much time as they liked to answer the questions.

We should note that there are two important limitations resulting from this approach. First, we could not assess reaction times because some of the questions involved open-ended responses, which meant that we could not gauge reaction times given variations in typing speed, length of answers, and so on.<sup>6</sup> Second, as discussed elsewhere in this paper, the presentation of signs was unnatural when compared to the way drivers encounter road signs while driving. However, since this was a pilot study set up in part to determine what variables we should focus on in further studies of this topic where we could present partici-

<sup>5</sup> Another exception to the randomness of the order was that the first sign was consistently a blank red octagon. This was done in the hope that presenting the respondents with a relatively familiar sign would allow them to ease into answering the survey questions more readily.

<sup>6</sup> The open-ended responses and non-open-ended responses could have been presented separately, but we opted to present the respondents with all of the questions for any given sign at once. This is, perhaps, non-optimal, but it was done largely because this approach is in line with earlier surveys on similar issues (most particularly Ford & Picha 2000 and Hawkins, Picha & Lopez 1998). We plan that future studies following up on this pilot study will include measures of respondent reaction time.





Figure 5. Road signs with completely redundant shape, color, and text.

Sign	Shape	Color	Text
RAILROAD CROSSING	Crossbuck	White	Railroad crossing
ONE WAY	Horizontal arrow	Black (with white arrow)	One way
STOP	Octagon	Red	Stop
YIELD	Downward-pointing triangle	Red (with white triangle)	Yield
DO NOT ENTER	Squared circle	Red (with white border)	Do not enter

Table 1. Linguistic and nonlinguistic content of standard forms of analyzed signs.

pants with road signs in a more realistic setting, and since similar surveys have been used successfully in previous studies of road signs (see, for example, Ford & Picha 2000 and Hawkins, Picha & Lopez 1998), we opted for this approach here.

The panel was made up of forty-six students in introductory undergraduate linguistics classes; we had planned to exclude any respondents who had a background in civil engineering, but that issue never arose. Before the respondents took the survey itself, we obtained limited demographic information, most importantly what parts of the world they had lived in, as well as what parts of the world they had driven or been licensed to drive in. The vast majority of the panel, as it turned out, had similar histories: They were all residents of the United States (and were licensed to drive in the United States), and very few had driven (or even visited) locations outside of the United States. Since the few that had been outside of the United States appeared to pattern with the rest of the respondents, we left them in our sample.

3. SIGNS ANALYZED. Since we are looking at potential differences between linguistic and nonlinguistic perception here, in this paper we focus on a set of five signs that (in their standard forms) are completely redundant with regard to shape, color, and the text they contain. These signs are shown in Figure 5; from left to right, the RAILROAD CROSSING sign, the ONE WAY sign, the STOP sign, the YIELD sign, and the DO NOT ENTER sign. Table 1 shows the content of these five signs; note that the shape and text of each sign is redundant (e.g., all crossbucks contain the text *railroad crossing*, and all signs that read *do not enter* are squared circles), and the color of each sign follows from the shape and text.

Here, we present an analysis of the interpretation of these signs when they were presented with various phrases. The phrases we presented with each of these signs are shown in

Sign	Phrases used
RAILROAD CROSSING	Railroad crossing, [blank]
ONE WAY	One way, stop, go, [blank]
STOP	Stop, yield, go, [blank]
YIELD	Yield, stop, go, [blank]
DO NOT ENTER	Do not enter, enter, [blank]

**Table 2.** *Phrases presented on each analyzed sign.*



**Figure 6.** *The red octagon in various forms, as seen by the survey respondents.*

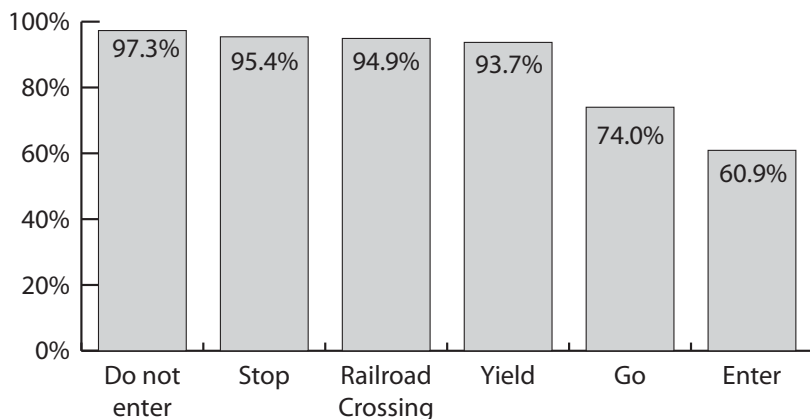
**Table 2.**<sup>7</sup> To give a more concrete picture of what these looked like, **Figure 6** shows the red octagon with all four phrases used with that shape-color combination. Note that, because this pilot analysis only covered the perception of textual content (or lack of content) on the five tested signs that are completely redundant in terms of form and content in actual use, in this paper we are presenting results for only fifteen of the eighty-eight signs that the survey respondents were faced with.<sup>8</sup>

4. THE INTERPRETATION OF ROAD SIGNS. We start out by looking at the panelists’ interpretation of signs on a purely linguistic basis, without looking at the shapes or colors of the signs that the phrases appeared on, to see if certain phrases had a stronger effect on perception.<sup>9</sup> This was done by coding whether the responses the panelists gave for the meanings of the signs matched the wording on the signs (e.g., responses of “stop” or “pause before going further” were counted as matching the wording *stop*), regardless of the nonlinguistic content of the signs they appeared on; responses expressing nothing but confusion or uncertainty were not included in the counts. The results for all of the responses for signs

<sup>7</sup> A glance at **Figure 2** reveals that we did not test every possible phrase combination for every sign. This is simply the result of the fact that some phrases couldn’t fit on a sign shape and still look like an actual possible road sign—consider, for example, the phrase *railroad crossing* on a downward-pointing triangle (particularly using the relatively small font used on YIELD signs), or the impossibility of placing the word *stop* on a crossbuck. This limited the combinations we could present to the respondents.

<sup>8</sup> We do note, however, that the initial results of additional testing on a different set of these of signs has confirmed the results described in this paper (Bowie & Bowie 2009).

<sup>9</sup> It is impossible, of course, to completely separate the phrases that were used from the shapes and colors of the signs they appeared on, since there were cases like the phrase *railroad crossing*, which only appeared on a white crossbuck. Because of this, one should keep in mind that the analysis of the perception of phrases here is only a first approximation of what was going on.



**Figure 7.** Interpretation of signs, by sign phrasing.

with linguistic content are given in **Figure 7**, in terms of the percentage of responses that matched the linguistic content of the sign.

It appears at first that there is a split between phrases that do not normally appear on road signs (*go* and *enter*) on the one hand and those that do on the other, but it turns out that the differences shown here are not statistically significant, possibly due to distributional issues.<sup>10</sup> These results are intriguing, though, and so we intend to investigate this more deeply in the future, but for now there is nothing more to say about this beyond the lack of a finding.

Given this result, it is clear that we need to look at each specific sign shape to see whether linguistic content made a difference in the interpretation of those signs. We begin by looking at the crossbuck, which is consistently used for the RAILROAD CROSSING sign. This was only presented as a blank sign and as one reading *railroad crossing*, since the shape of the sign made it difficult to produce realistic-looking signs with other phrases. The results for the panelists' interpretations are given in **Figure 8** (overleaf); here, the percentages given are the percentage of panelists giving responses that matched the shape of the sign (i.e., identifying it as a RAILROAD CROSSING sign).

Once again, however, these results show no statistically significant difference.<sup>11</sup> In this case, though, the reason is not due to a sample size problem, but it appears to stem instead from the fact that the blank crossbuck was identified as a RAILROAD CROSSING sign so frequently that even though the addition of words identifying it as such increased the rate

<sup>10</sup> Based on a chi-square test with 366 tokens in a table with five degrees of freedom. (Note that here and elsewhere responses that did not actually offer a judgment on the meaning of the sign or that simply expressed confusion were not included in the analysis.) Since the data here and elsewhere in this paper was consistently binary and discrete rather than scalar, testing for statistical significance in this study was done using chi-square tests with the threshold for statistical significance was set at the arbitrary level of  $p < .05$ . The Holm-Bonferroni method was used to eliminate false positives in cases where more than one test was necessary.

<sup>11</sup> Based on a chi-square test with 73 tokens in a table with one degree of freedom.

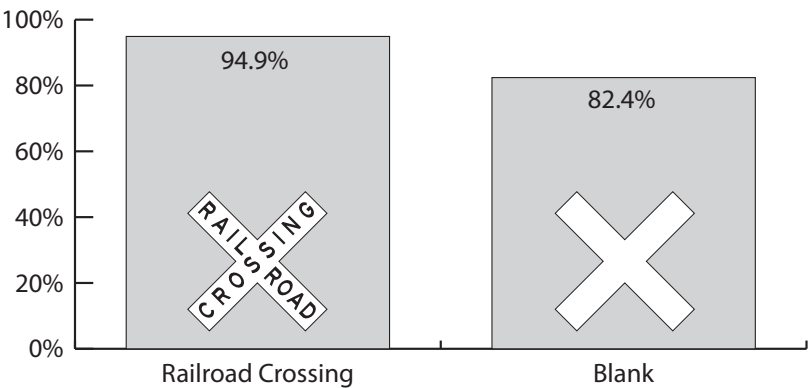


Figure 8. Rate of identification of railroad crossing signs as matching sign shape.

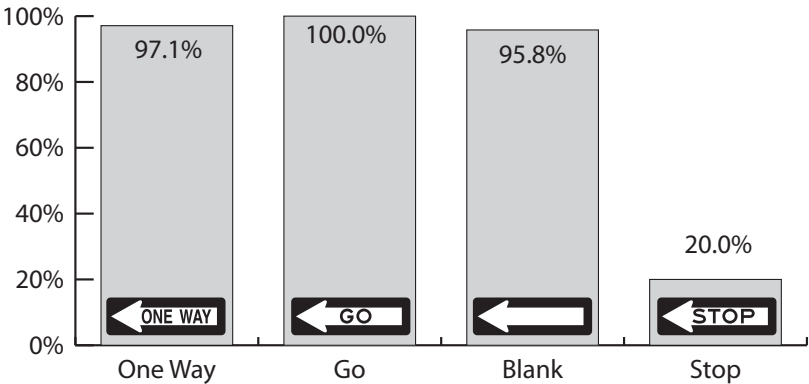
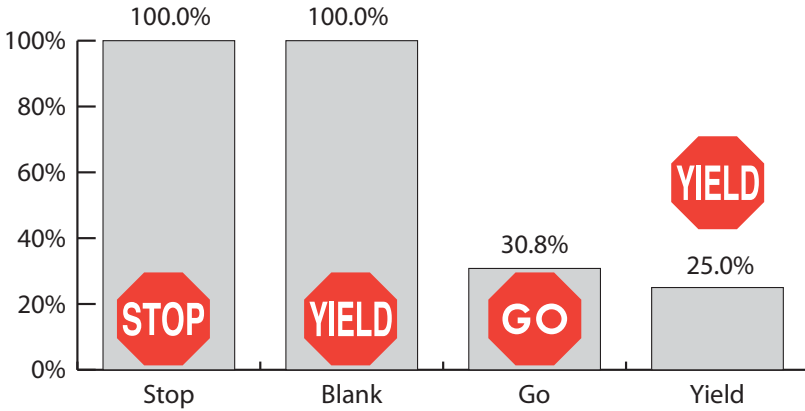


Figure 9. Rate of identification of one way-shaped signs as matching sign shape.

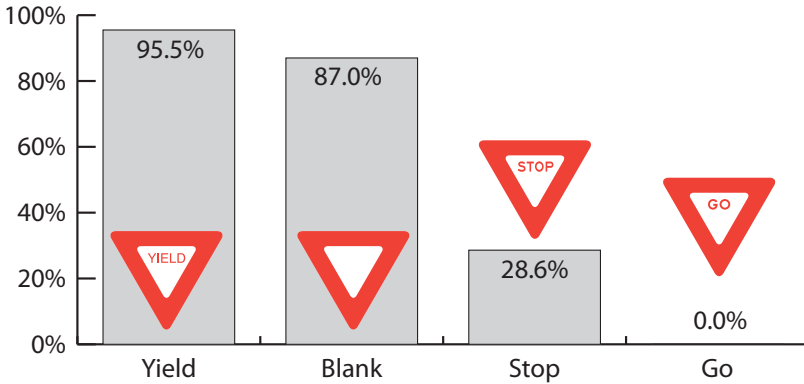
of correct identification, the increase in correct identifications couldn't rise to the level of statistical significance. Therefore, this particular sign can't be used to draw conclusions about the effects of linguistic content on road signs.

The remaining signs, however, all show significant differences between at least some sorts of linguistic content. We begin with the white arrow on a black horizontal rectangle, which is consistently used for the ONE WAY sign. The results for this are shown in **Figure 9**. There is no statistical difference between the signs reading *one way* or *go*, or the blank sign—all of these were identified at very high rates as ONE WAY signs. However, the word *stop* had a significant effect blocking the identification of this as a ONE WAY sign.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Based on a chi-square test with 75 tokens in a table with three degrees of freedom; the non-difference between the blank sign and the ones reading *one way* and *go* was based on a chi-square test on that subset of the data.



**Figure 10.** Rate of identification of stop-shaped signs as matching sign shape.

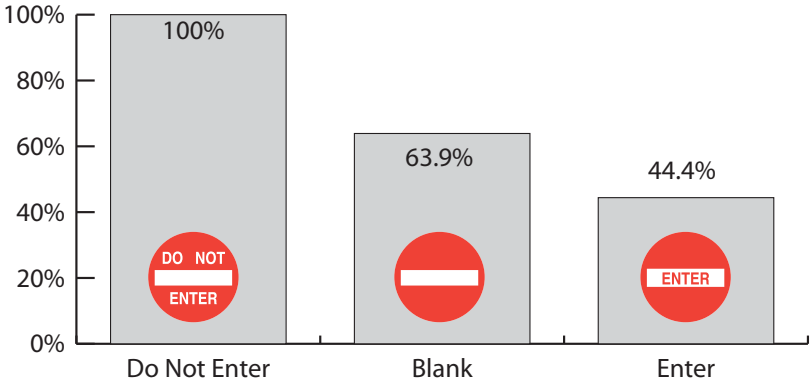


**Figure 11.** Rate of identification of yield-shaped signs as matching sign shape.

Results for the red octagon are shown in **Figure 10**. Similarly to the ONE WAY-shaped signs, there was no difference in identification of the blank red octagon and the red octagon reading *stop*—in fact, both of them were identified as STOP signs 100% of the time. However, text reading *go* or *yield* had a significant blocking effect on the interpretation of the red octagon as a STOP sign.<sup>13</sup>

**Figure 11** shows the panel's interpretation of the downward-pointing red triangle, which is consistently used for the YIELD sign. In this case, there was again no statistically significant difference in the rates of interpretation of all the blank sign and the sign reading *yield*. However, the phrases *stop* and *go* led to large significant differences in the interpretation of

<sup>13</sup> Based on a chi-square test with 107 tokens in a table with three degrees of freedom. The lack of difference between the blank sign and the one reading *stop* could not be tested statistically (since there was no variation in the responses), but we still feel confident making that claim.



**Figure 12.** Rate of identification of do not enter-shaped signs as matching sign shape.

the sign shape, to the point that including the word *go* on this sign completely blocked the interpretation of this shape-color combination as a YIELD sign.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, results for interpretation of the squared red circle are shown in **Figure 12**. Even though all of the respondents identified this as a DO NOT ENTER sign when the phrase *do not enter* was included on the sign, confusion increased significantly when the phrase was left off the sign, and even more when the phrase on the sign was *enter*.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that, alone among the sign shapes discussed in this paper, linguistic content was necessary for the panelists to interpret this sign shape as a DO NOT ENTER sign.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH. After all this, the implications are clear and, at core, unsurprising: Linguistic content has an effect on interpretation of meaning. The details of this, though, are interesting.

In particular, in the case of road signs, where linguistic and nonlinguistic content are intended to reinforce each other for a variety of reasons, linguistic content reinforces the expected interpretation of nonlinguistic content, but linguistic content can also override the nonlinguistic content. This is perhaps unsurprising given the differences between processing of linguistic and nonlinguistic information discussed at the beginning of this paper, but what is surprising is how completely linguistic content can, in some cases, result in a reading that doesn't match the nonlinguistic input. Consider, for example, the downward-pointing red triangle, where the effect of the linguistic cue *go* was so strong that no panel member interpreted the resulting sign as a YIELD sign. This is, of course, not always the case; consider that the white arrow on a black horizontal rectangle was consistently interpreted as a ONE WAY sign even when the linguistic content read *go*. We intend to look at

<sup>14</sup> Overall results based on a chi-square test with 55 tokens in a table with three degrees of freedom. (The non-difference between the blank sign and the one reading *yield* was based on a chi-square test on that subset of the data.)

<sup>15</sup> Based on a chi-square test with 85 tokens in a table with two degrees of freedom.

this interplay between the linguistic and nonlinguistic content of such signs more closely in the future.

Of course, not all road signs act the same way with regard to interpretation of linguistic and nonlinguistic content. One particularly intriguing case is the squared red circle, which is consistently used for the DO NOT ENTER sign. This is the only sign where there was a significant difference between the interpretation of the blank version of the sign and the sign with its normally expected linguistic content. For the other signs, the blank version of each sign was interpreted at a very high rate with the meaning that its shape-color combination always has, and so the addition of standard linguistic content couldn't affect the interpretation of the sign enough to result in a significant difference. The blank squared circle, on the other hand, was only attributed the meaning associated with its shape 63.9% of the time. Interestingly, this shape-color combination (or an extremely similar one) without any linguistic content is regularly used as a DO NOT ENTER sign in other jurisdictions (including Canada, Japan, and most of Europe), and so we plan to investigate whether drivers from the United States who have had experience driving outside of the United States interpret this sign differently from those who, as the panel we report on here, have not had such experience.

Finally, we wish to mention what is probably the major shortcoming of a study of road signs made using a survey instrument: The presentation of road signs to the survey respondents was highly unnatural, particularly in that respondents were allowed as much time as they wished to offer an interpretation of the stimuli. This is, of course, not a realistic simulation of the way drivers interpret road signs—in actual practice, drivers have only seconds, often fractions of a second, to interpret road signs and behave accordingly, and the amount of time drivers have to react to signs has been found to affect their interpretation of them (Knoblauch and Pietrucha 1987). Therefore, we plan to take our findings from this study (along with other results from the survey, such as where drivers expect to see certain signs) to set up studies a larger, more comprehensive study of drivers' reactions to these signs in more realistic surroundings.<sup>16</sup> With this information, we would be in a position to make recommendations on how to change road signs to increase public safety, whether by increasing redundant information to allow drivers to interpret signs more easily or by removing information (whether linguistic or nonlinguistic) from signs to avoid confusing drivers by overloading them with unnecessary information.

However, despite such limitations, the results presented here do show that, when individuals are presented with mostly-familiar items such as road signs, there does appear to be some difference in the perception of their linguistic and nonlinguistic components. Though the specific details await future refinement, we can say that we have found evidence that there is an asymmetry in the linguistic and nonlinguistic perception of items presented visually.

---

<sup>16</sup> This would almost certainly involve the use of a driving simulator, since unpredictable reactions to signs in real-world situations could place drivers and bystanders at undue risk. Such an approach would still not give a perfect reflection of the way drivers interpret linguistic and nonlinguistic information on road signs, but it would be a closer approximation of reality than we are able to offer here.

## REFERENCES

- BOWIE, DAVID & JEANNE M. BOWIE. 2009. The perception of road signs by road users. *88th annual meeting of the Transportation Research Board*. CD-ROM. Washington DC: Transportation Research Board.
- CATLIN, JACK & HELEN NEVILLE. 1976. The laterality effect in reaction time to speech stimuli. *Neuropsychologia* 14:141–43.
- FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION. 2007. *Manual on uniform traffic control devices for streets and highways*, 2nd rev. Washington DC: US Department of Transportation.
- FORD, GARRY L. & DALE L. PICHA. 2000. Teenage drivers' understanding of traffic control devices. *Transportation research record* 1708:1–11.
- HAWKINS, H. GENE, JR. 1992. Evolution of the MUTCD: Early standards for traffic control devices. *ITE journal* 62:23–26.
- , DALE L. PICHA & CARLOS LOPEZ. 1998. Mexican driver comprehension of US traffic control devices. *Transportation research record* 1628:15–24.
- JUSCZYK, PETER W., BURTON S. ROSNER, JAMES E. CUTTING, CHRISTOPHER F. FOARD & LINDA B. SMITH. 1977. Categorical perception of nonspeech sounds by 2-month-old infants. *Perception and psychophysics* 21:50–54.
- KNOBLAUCH, RICHARD & MARTIN T. PIETRUCHA. *Motorists' comprehension of regulatory, warning, and symbolic signs*, vol. 2, technical report. Report on contract number DTFH61-83-C-00136. Washington DC: Federal Highway Administration.
- KRESS, GUNTHER & THEO VAN LEEUWEN. 2001. *Multimodal discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- MORSE, PHILIP ALLEN. 1972. The discrimination of speech and nonspeech stimuli in early infancy. *Journal of experimental child psychology* 14:477–92.
- OSCAR-BERMAN, MARLENE, HAROLD GOODGLASS, & HERMAN DONNENFELD. 1974. Dichotic ear-order effects with nonverbal stimuli. *Cortex* 10:270–277.
- O'TOOLE, MICHAEL. 1994. *The language of displayed art*. London: Leicester University Press.
- POLKA, LINDA, PETER W. JUSCZYK & SUSAN RVACHEW. 1995. Methods for studying speech perception in infants and children. In *Speech perception and linguistic experience: Issues in cross-language research*, ed. W. Strange, 49–89. Baltimore: York Press.
- SODERQUIST, DAVID R. & NATALIA HOENIGMANN. 1973. Infant responsivity to pure tone stimulation. *Journal of auditory research* 13:321–27.
- WOOD, CHARLES C., WILLIAM R. GOFF & RUTH S. DAY. 1971. Auditory evoked potentials during speech perception. *Science* 173:1248–51.
- YUND, E. WILLIAM, AKIRA UNO & DAVID L. WOODS. 1999. Preattentive control of serial auditory processing in dichotic listening. *Brain and language* 66:358–76.





TRANSLATING JEAN-CHARLES PANDOSY: DE  
MARSEILLE À L'OUEST CANADIEN, 1847 À 1891

LORIN CARD

*University of British Columbia Okanagan*

*JEAN-CHARLES PANDOSY: DE MARSEILLE À L'OUEST CANADIEN, 1847 À 1891*, compiled and written by Edmond Rivère (2002), presents the history of the founding of *La Mission*, a settlement which is now Kelowna, British Columbia. The book includes some of the legends about, and letters written by, Jean-Charles Pandosy, the Oblate priest from Marseilles, France, who founded *La Mission*. My translation of the book into English proved to be a challenging task. In this essay I will discuss some of the difficulties involved, and why the task turned out to be more daunting than it appeared at first sight.

1. THE CHALLENGE. On examination, the physical appearance of the book is meant to remind the reader of an authentic diary-type chapbook, of the sort kept by Kevin Costner's character, John Dunbar, featured in the film *Dances with Wolves*. Its glossy cover has a brownish hue reminiscent of a well-used, dusty diary from the Far West, and the pictures and maps it contains are mostly hand-drawn, in a manner similar to Dunbar's diary. The book's opening story recounts a tale about the time when some Okanagan Natives came to visit the new priest upon his arrival in the Okanagan Valley. At this meeting, Pandosy, from a few paces back, threw his knife at a target carved in a tree, hitting a makeshift bull's eye several times. At that moment, Pandosy gained the respect and awe of the Natives among whom he had come to found the settlement which, along with *L'Anse au sable* (Sandy Cove), would grow into Kelowna. The book is told as a story, "un récit", yet it also contains official history, following Pandosy in his trek westward from Marseilles to the Canadian West, and covers the years from 1847 to 1891. In the Preface, Rivère, who is himself originally from Toulon, near Marseilles, and who has lived in Kelowna for close to twenty years, notes that he feels an affinity for Pandosy's trek and his life in British Columbia. Such a mixed diachronic and synchronic text presents a number of inherent difficulties that must be solved to achieve a good quality translation<sup>1</sup>.

2. TEXT LINGUISTICS. In order to prepare the text for translation, I adopted a text linguistics approach that first requires an analysis of the major characteristics of the text, in order to ensure that those characteristics are translated or that equivalences are produced for them. The text is multilayered, and written in a somewhat telegraphic style; it also contains a number of implicit ideas that need explicitation in English. Rivère's text flows nicely, and

---

<sup>1</sup> The fact that Rivère has become a close friend and colleague of mine only increases my desire to produce a translation that does the book justice.

the style is literary and quite elevated. But the text also presents a selection of Pandosy's letters written using archaic constructions and a high literary style. His letters include some scripture and expressions in Latin, and some expressions in Provençal. In addition, there is Rivère's recounting of official history blended with Native legends such as that of Ogo-pogo, the sea monster lurking at the bottom of Lake Okanagan, and the story of Pandosy's knife-throwing prowess. Those legends are recounted in a more conversational, though still literary tone.

Rivière's French text uses mainly the *présent historique* and partly the *futur antérieur*, but what should be adequate English equivalents of these tenses? I have worked on this translation with three classes of advanced French-to-English translation students at the University of British Columbia Okanagan, and my students have assisted immensely in finding appropriate word choices and style; they have almost unanimously chosen to render the *présent historique* in the English simple past tense, thus creating a grammatical transposition. Most reference books concur that the historical present in English serves to render the action of a story more vivid, but Ruge (1979), among other authorities, notes that it is difficult to sustain the use of that tense in a longer text. It also did not "feel right" to use this tense throughout the translation. This choice was confirmed by a number of LACUS members at the 35th annual conference held at Université Laval in June 2008, following a very interesting and in-depth discussion on the place of the historical present in English. Examples (1) and (2) below show representative and vivid, though not exhaustive, cases of the *présent historique* and the *futur antérieur* in the original text:

- (1) *La Robe noire... taille alors à hauteur d'épaules un cercle..., recule... et lance son couteau vers la cible.* (13)  
'The Black Robe... carved a circle at shoulder height... backed up... and threw his knife at the target....'
- (2) *Il n'aura pas été seul. Le chef François lui aura longtemps tenu la main.* (201)  
'Yet he would not be alone. Chief François watched over him for a long time, holding his hand.'

In (1), it would have sounded odd to use the historical present in English to elevate Pandosy to the level of a legend, as it seems too informal and not remote enough in time. Attempts to compensate for the loss of immediacy which use of the historical present might have given include the accumulation of verbs in the simple past to make the actions described seem "matter of fact" in English, and the choice of the more familiar *backed up* instead of a more formal yet less vivid *retraced his steps*. In the second example, the idiom *watched over him* and the gerund *holding his hand* are used in an attempt to render the on-going present action of the *futur antérieur*.

Pandosy's prose is much more formal, and indeed archaic (i.e., in structures, word choice, etc.) than Rivère's. It thus demands a more formal and archaic sounding translation. The following representative example, (3), demonstrates such a diachronic translation:

- (3) *Je voulais qu'il prît plus qu'il n'y avait sur la liste; mais il ne voulut pas.* (199)  
 'I wished that he had taken more than that which was on the list, but he would not.'

Rivière's prose is less formal, as demonstrated by the following representative, synchronic example in (4):

- (4) *Pandosity s'est constamment penché sur la langue des autochtones afin de pouvoir mieux les évangéliser* (119).  
 'Pandosity constantly pored over the indigenous people's languages in order to better preach to them.'

Sometimes, the two styles are present in a single collocation, and require shifting from formal to less formal levels of language and style in the same paragraph, as illustrated by the following representative example in 5):

- (5) "...*Nous pourrions alors chanter:  
 Mon vignoble à l'abri du vent/Se réchauffe au soleil levant/Où je suis comme un lézard vert.../Du beau raisin j'ai découvert.*"  
*Pandosity se croit presque en Provence. Il n'a pas tout à fait tort même dans cette lointaine Amérique.* (95)  
 "...We will then be able to sing:  
 My vineyard sheltered from the gale/Is warmed by the rising sun in this vale/  
 Where I am like the lizard green.../With the loveliest grapes I have ever seen."  
 Pandosity almost believed he was back in Provence. He was not far off, even in distant America.'

The challenge with both the synchronic and diachronic translations, as with the historical present and *futur antérieur* verb tenses, lies in making the translation come alive without losing its formal style, while also conserving its vibrancy as a text. Only time will tell if my attempt will meet with success.

3. THE METATEXTUAL. A further challenge arises in dealing with the metatextual material, the context or situation, or flora and fauna. For example, Pandosity uses a metaphor to describe a discerning mind that can tell the difference between a *porc épic* 'a porcupine' and an *hérisson* 'a hedgehog'. Some identical animals have different names in Canada and in France, such as the French Canadian *carcajou*, 'the wolverine', which in France is called a *glouton*. In addition, there are animals that look very different but whose functions are actually quite similar in France and Canada; an example of such is France's *putois*, which is 'a pole cat', and Canada's *mouffette*, or *bête puante*, 'a skunk'. In Rivère's book, we find that Pandosity also discovered that Canada's plants are very different than those in France, and if they actually were the same their names were different in the standard French of France.

Place names are also liberally translated into French in Rivère's book, and it is necessary to decide the grounds on which a particular example can remain in French or should be

repatriated, or translated back into English, in an English translation. Some names, such as *l'Anse au sable* 'Sandy Cove', had readily available English names. Yet, other names, such as Peace River, in Northern B.C., have no readily available French name<sup>2</sup>. Also, Pandosy frequently refers to himself as *le Grec*, due to his darker, Mediterranean skin, although in English, a Greek writing Latin, as Pandosy often does in his letters, sounds quite strange. The following, (6) and (7), are two representative examples of place names in my translations:

- (6) *Le missionnaire quitte l'Anse au Sable non sans un pincement au cœur.* (175)  
 'The missionary left Sandy Cove, but not without feeling a tug on his heartstrings.'
- (7) *Dans deux jours, je pars à la Mission des Cœurs d'Alène.* (73)  
 'In two days, I am leaving for the Mission of the Coeurs d'Alene.'

In the first example, the English translation of *Anse au Sable* is readily available, yet Pandosy's experience of the place with that name was in French, not in English. However, in order to facilitate the target text reader's experience, it is my intent to present the readily available English translations, mainly to free the reader from too much foreignness. In the second example, however, *Cœur d'Alene* is the name of a small city in Idaho (although in spelling it drops the *accent grave* over the *e*, and the *oe* ligature and its pronunciation is Anglicised), and it should be represented in English as it is a well-known English place name.

4. A SIGNIFICANT IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION. There is also at least one idiomatic expression that requires a free translation in English, and that is the expression: *Chante, beau merle!* 'Sing out, oh beautiful starling' which Pandosy used in referring, and not kindly, to one of his Superiors. That remark earned him a harsh evaluation from his Superiors: "*Vous critiquez vos supérieurs.*" ('You criticize your superiors'), yet he had felt he had to speak up as he and his compatriots had not been receiving sufficient provisions and material support from their local Superiors. A Google search reveals that this expression is used currently today, and there are even some references to Sarkozy, the President of France, whose words were denigrated with the use of the expression. It also appears in several different forms, such as: *Chante, beau merle, chante! Ta cage brûle!* ('...Your cage is burning!') or *...car ce soir, tu auras une belle cage* ('...for tonight you will be put in a beautiful cage') or *...tu seras en brochette* ('...you will be put on a spit') and even *Chante, beau merle! Tu m'intéresses!* ('... I find you interesting!') which is a parody of *Cause toujours tu m'intéresses* ('Keep talking; I find you interesting!'). Even Wikipedia contains an explanation of the meaning of the expression: *Tu peux toujours parler, je ne t'écouterai pas.* ('Talk all you want, I'm not listening.'). Yet this expression has no fixed or received translation, so what might be its English equivalent? One might think of 'Sing out, lovely starling!'; yet does such a literal translation convey the negative connotations of the original expression? An expression in English which refers to the "cawing of an old crow!" seems closer to the meaning of the original. In other words,

<sup>2</sup> Although it does have a French name, *la Rivière de la Paix*, when the same river runs through Northern Alberta.

Pandosy was telling his Superiors that one of them was uttering hollow words, which fell on (his) deaf ears, but an expression as modern as “Yadda, yadda, yadda! Blah! Blah! Blah!” would be anachronistic in the last half of the nineteenth century. The search for an equivalent effect from an equivalent expression is one of the little joys of literary translation! I settled upon, “Your song, you old crow, is such nice music to my ears!”

5. CONCLUSION. My goal was to present an equivalent, multi-layered text, including in the translation an equivalence of the levels of language, cultural experience, and the idiomatic expressions of the original text. Regarding the notion of representing the book as a diary from the Far West, when the audience changes from French readers living in France (who have a view of the Far West as exotic and bordering on the fantastic) to the Okanagan population, it might possibly then become a coloured historical storybook to present the founding of *la Mission* to those who live in and around the area, but who might not be familiar with its history, or with the man who became a street name “Pandosy”—and in some circles, a legend. The text is challenging and not for beginners. One must bear in mind the fact that all translations are incomplete from a number of perspectives. First, a translation is always *en devenir*, evolving or becoming, as highlighted by Umberto Eco’s book, *La Struttura assente* (The Absent Structure) on the sign and semiotics (1968). Second, the equivalences presented by a given translation are not complete reproductions of the words presented in the original text, as there is usually not complete “semantic coverage” of the original words by their translations. Indeed, it is not always possible to fully render in the target text the connotations and nuances in such expressions as *Chante, beau merle!* Last, the translation, even once published, can still be improved by other, more skilled translators.

When the text in French is more or less opaque, partly due to a telegraphic, yet elevated, style, it seems that an acceptable equivalent in English would be an elevated style which is slightly more explicit, and is literary without being too formal. Thus, in order to execute such a translation as I propose, the translator must assume the role of a (re)writer/author, to quite a considerable degree. As the translator, I will also have to make certain decisions regarding politically correct terms such as ‘Natives’ for *Indiens*, and regarding which explicitations (i.e., ‘yet, he would not be alone’ and ‘watched over him’) must be added to the translation, and which expressions can be left implicit. In a way, if plotting the original text could be likened to mapping an undiscovered area, creating a translation could be likened to establishing a new settlement, which resembles the old “camp” of the original text, but which has new elements and a life of its own. Finally, establishing literary translation prowess through the creation of a good translation could be likened to Pandosy establishing his knife-throwing prowess by hitting the bull’s eye carved on the tree. The final judges in the knife throwing legend were the onlookers, the “readers” of that situation, just as the final judge of the translation will be the onlookers, or more precisely, the readers of the target text.



## REFERENCES

- ECO, UMBERTO. 1968. *La struttura assente* [The absent structure]. Milan. Bompiani.
- RIVIÈRE, EDMOND. 2002. *Jean-Charles Padosy: De Marseille à l'Ouest canadien, 1847 à 1891*. Cholet: Éditions Pays et Terroirs.
- RUGE, FERDINAND E. 1979. *Ruge rules*. Washington DC: Rowman and Littlefield.



# THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF ABSTRACTIONS: ABSTRACTIONS, DAMNED ABSTRACTIONS, AND DAMNED LYING ABSTRACTIONS

DOUGLAS W. COLEMAN  
*University of Toledo*

LINGUISTICS HAS EXHIBITED LONG-STANDING DOMAIN CONFUSIONS (Yngve 1996:14–15). Yngve (1996 *passim*) has discussed how these have frustrated efforts to make linguistics truly scientific at its core.

The physical, or objective, domain is that which exists independently of any observer's perception; the assumption of the existence of the physical domain has been called the *ontological assumption* of science (see, e.g., Yngve 1996:101) or simply scientific *realism* (see, e.g., d'Espagnat 1979:163). The criterion of truth in the physical domain is the criterion adopted by science: the consistency between a statement of generalization and observation by means of the senses. As Shermer (1997:16) says,

Modern skepticism is embodied in the scientific method, which involves gathering data to test natural [physical-domain] explanations for natural [physical-domain] phenomena. A claim becomes factual when it is confirmed to such an extent that it would be reasonable to offer temporary agreement. But all facts of science are provisional and subject to challenge...<sup>1</sup>

The physical domain can be contrasted with a logical one—the latter being one whose objects do not exist apart from people, but are created by assumption, either directly, or by logical deduction from other assumptions. Saussure placed the “objects of language” in the logical domain when he said they are not given in advance and available to be observed from different viewpoints but that rather, “it would seem that it is the viewpoint that creates the object” (1959:8). The criterion for truth in the logical domain is the criterion adopted by philosophy: valid argument from assumptions.<sup>2</sup>

The distinction between these two domains is critical to understanding abstraction in linguistics and how it differs from scientific abstraction. In this paper, I will discuss three

---

<sup>1</sup> In science, something created by assumption is not data; thus, a sentence thought up by a linguist is not data. Only evidence gathered from the physical domain constitutes data in science. See the discussion below, or refer to the sources cited there.

<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps worth clarifying a key point here. In everyday speech, we often hear people talk about their assumptions and conclusions as if these were the same thing, for example, “Based on what you say, I assume/conclude *X*” or “We don’t need to see the letter; it’s a fair assumption/conclusion that it contains *Y*.” However, here, I will follow the more formal practice of referring to those things taken on faith as *assumptions* and to those things arrived at by valid argument to be *conclusions*.

types of things commonly referred to as “abstractions.” I call them *abstractions*, *damned abstractions*, and *damned lying abstractions*. I will use the term *abstractions* to refer to general statements about the physical domain. By *damned abstractions*, I will refer to general statements about things which lie entirely in the logical domain. As for *damned lying abstractions*, these are general statements with built-in logical / physical domain confusions; in the worst cases, the result is a general statement that is still defended by whoever put it forward, even though it is clearly contradicted by observation in the physical domain.

1. ABSTRACTIONS. The first type is the abstraction generalized from physical reality. An example of this type is THE IRON ATOM. If I hold in my hand a nail made of steel, it contains many iron atoms, all of which possess independent physical reality. Although each of those bits of reality are only *arbitrarily* partitioned off by an observer from the rest of the world, they are nevertheless part of the physical domain. They are in no way abstract.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, when I generalize the theoretical construct of THE IRON ATOM, which at once describes each of the atoms in the nail, and in a sense all of them at once, I have created an abstraction. The abstraction of THE IRON ATOM depends upon human perception of the environment as composed of discrete things which can be compared to memory and judged similar or different.<sup>4</sup> It is important to distinguish (1) an iron atom physically present in the nail from (2) THE IRON ATOM, the generalized, abstracted model, or representation, of many arbitrarily partitioned off bits of the physical domain. The former exists apart from the observer; the latter does not. The case of THE IRON ATOM involves a statement about a type of physical system identifiable as such on the basis of its internal physical-domain properties (the number of neutrons and protons in the nucleus, the number and arrangement of electrons at various energy levels). The generalization is a model of the physical domain couched entirely in physical-domain terms. This is a theoretical abstraction in the scientific sense.

Here is an example of an abstraction from the physical domain in hard-science linguistics (HSL). We observe customers standing in the check-out line in a book store. In most

<sup>3</sup> One member of the audience for the oral version of this paper insisted that the atoms in the table in front of me were abstract, not physically real. I counter this by saying that if I cut the table in half, the halves are no less physically real than the whole. And if I cut it again into quarters, eighths, and so on, the parts do not become more abstract simply because they are smaller. This is the case right on down to the individual atoms and their parts—protons, electrons, and neutrons. Individual iron atoms can be seen via a scanning tunneling microscope (see, e.g., Day 1999).

<sup>4</sup> After the oral version of this paper was presented at LACUS 35 in Quebec City, one member of the audience asserted that “scientists accept that nothing exists apart from our perception of it.” Taken at face value, this assertion is solipsism, and is decidedly *not* scientific. The assertion contains a small kernel of truth, however. A basic assumption of science is that there is an objective world, given in advance. This must be the case, else there is no point in repeated observation to establish reliability, no point in statistical inference—again, see d’Espagnat (1979 *passim*). In contrast, our observations of the world and the abstractions we generalize from these observations are not given in advance, and they must not be confused with the physical domain (Yngve 1996:1–4), which is.



cases, the customer at the head of the line is watching and sees when a cashier is free; he sees the cashier looking at him and starts to walk forward to check out, even before either of them speaks (Coleman 2004). However, when the customer at the head of the line is not attending to what is happening (usually if the line is moving slowly or is very long), the cashier will speak to get his attention. Coleman (2004) notes that if the customer is alone in line, this usually means the cashier says something including the articulation [ju], such as “I can help you (over here)” or “Can I help you?” If there are other customers also in line, the cashier typically says something including the articulation [nɛkst], such as “I can help who’s next (over here),” “I can help the next person,” and so on. (The cases in which these generalizations seemed to fail were ones in which the cashier’s view of the line was blocked by a head-high display of reading glasses.) We can generalize some of the relevant properties of the cashier in (1)–(3).

- (1) <ready> x [customer]<in queue> : <show readiness>
- (2) <show readiness> =  
 $i_1$  x [customer]<look at/cashier> : <greet>  
 $i_1$  x [customer]<~look at/cashier> : <call>
- (3) <call> =  
 $i_2$  x [queue]<size/1> : <emit sound of “I can help you”>  
 $i_2$  x [queue]<size/more than 1> : <emit sound of “I can help who’s next”>

The above shows how we can describe part of the events in terms of physical-domain properties of the cashier. We read them as follows. (1) If the cashier is ready to check out a customer — modeled as the property <ready> — and he sees there is a customer waiting in the queue, then he indicates to the customer that he is ready (<show readiness>). (2) The property <show readiness> models what the cashier does next. If at this point the cashier sees the customer looking at him, which we model as the cashier having an orthoconcept of the customer (Yngve 2006 *passim*), then he simply greets the customer, as the customer invariably walks forward as a result of the eye contact alone (Coleman 2004). If the cashier sees that the customer is not looking at him, he calls to get the customer’s attention (<call>). We model the relevant feature of the queue as the cashier sees it via his orthoconcept of the queue’s <size> property, which has the possible values <size/1> and <size/more than 1>. Note that the system modeled here [cashier] and all of its properties can be related to a physical-domain system and its properties.<sup>5</sup> All are subject to test by means of observation; none must be taken solely on assumption.

<sup>5</sup> As Yngve says, (1996:324, fn. 58), “the concept of a system in science is quite different from the logical-domain concept of system, following Saussure and others, sometimes found in the linguistics of language.” In science, a system is a portion of the physical domain selected for observation and analysis, modeled in theory *strictly in physical-domain terms*; see for example, Gould (1987:182); also compare scientific usage in *stellar system* (astronomy), *organ system* (anatomy and physiology), and so on. Contrast these with Saussure’s concept of a system, as exemplified in his famous comparison of the game of chess to language (Saussure 1959:22–23, 88, 110) or the way linguists commonly refer to a *phonological system* as composed of phonemes, a *morphological system*

Yngve (1996) and Yngve (2006) contain many additional examples showing how abstractions in HSL are taken from the observation of the physical domain and couched entirely in physical-domain terms; the recent volume edited by Yngve and Wąsik (2004) contains a selection of examples by several other authors, as well.

2. DAMNED ABSTRACTIONS. In contrast, when we accept solely by assumption an abstract system, such as that of a symbolic logic, the entities of the system do not have correlates in the physical domain. While we can associate THE IRON ATOM with many parts of the nail based on their physical properties, we cannot associate THE OPERATOR  $\supset$  (logical if-then) with a physical property of anything (we are frequently cautioned against associating it with causality). Nor can we associate *modus ponens*, for example, with a physical process. Abstractions like THE OPERATOR  $\supset$ , and *modus ponens* are pure abstractions of the kind created by assumption in philosophy. They are not scientific abstractions, the kind generalized from the physical domain. Gardner (Carroll 1960:268–269) quotes Carroll (1958:Appendix §2) and adds his own comments on how the choice of assumptions can drastically affect a logical framework (Carroll 1960:268–270, fn. 6).<sup>6</sup> As Gardner says in giving a more recent example, “In mathematics [large] amounts of time have been dissipated in useless argumentation over the ‘meaning’ of such phrases as ‘imaginary number,’ ‘transfinite number,’ and so on; useless because such words mean precisely what they are defined to mean; no more, no less” (1960:270).

The concept of a *morpheme* is a common *damned abstraction* in linguistics. Here is how I have sometimes explained this problem. Imagine you are in a typical classroom with thirty chairs, all of the same manufacture; let’s also say they are in more or less the same, fairly new, condition so that we can easily imagine that we cannot simply look from one to the next to tell them apart. If I ask you how many chairs there are, you will not tell me there is just one, but thirty. If I ask you how you know it’s all not the same chair, you will think I must be joking. But if I press you on how you know, you may say (probably with exasperation) that it’s physically impossible for the same chair to be in thirty places at once; the thirty chairs may be the same *kind* of chair, but they are obviously thirty *different* chairs. Now look at (4):

---

as composed of roots and affixes with rules of combination. In the cases cited, the concept of a system in a linguistics of language is composed of abstract entities created, as Saussure put it, “by the point of view of the observer” (see above), *not* in strictly physical-domain terms. In fact, the point of Saussure’s chess game analogy is to show the *irrelevance* of a particular physical realization of a linguistic system.

<sup>6</sup> In speaking with mathematicians and reading (albeit little of) what they write, I find it is clear that some believe they are constructing an abstract system, while others feel they are discovering a system which exists apart from them, able to be observed and understood. Those who believe it to be something discoverable clearly take that thing to be some other kind of reality than the physical, perhaps one not unlike the logical domain of the ancient Greeks (Yngve 1996:14–18) or its Christian analogue as understood by some twentieth century theologians, e.g., what is meant in Lewis’ *Till We Have Faces*, when a character says, “Nothing [here in our material reality] is yet in its true form” (1956:305), or for that matter the depiction of Aslan’s Country — a metaphor for an ideal reality [heaven] — in the same author’s *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Lewis 1994).

- (4) up up up up up up up up up up  
 up up up up up up up up up up  
 up up up up up up up up up up

You see thirty instances of the *same morpheme* (*not* the same *kind of* morpheme). The morpheme *up* appears to be in thirty places in once. But we have already agreed that the same thing cannot be in thirty places at once—it's physically impossible—unless, of course, physical possibility does not apply to morphemes. The chairs exist in the physical domain, and are, in Saussure's terms, "given in advance" (1959:8), but the morpheme *up* does not exist in the physical domain. Thus, anything we conclude about the morpheme *up* depends upon our assumptions, beginning with our assumption of its very existence. This has very serious ramifications. If the morpheme *up* exists only because we assume it to exist, then arguments about whether it "really" is a preposition or a verb particle in *think up* are of the same sort as the arguments in mathematics over the meaning of "imaginary number" or "transfinite number".<sup>7</sup>

- (5) a. Theo does eat very slowly.  
 b. The does eat very slowly.

There is another key difference in how words as abstractions are related to their purported physical realization vs. how scientific abstractions relate to the physical domain. An iron atom, for example, is an iron atom because of its observable physical structure. An atom of mercury is a mercury atom because of its quite different physical structure. There is no such thing as iron atoms "neutralizing" with mercury atoms under such-and-such environmental conditions, the way two phonemes are described as neutralizing under certain conditions in their phonological environment (e.g., /s/ and /z/ in English) or the way two graphemic forms (call them *does<sub>1</sub>* and *does<sub>2</sub>*) are said to neutralize as in (5). If an iron atom could be altered to have the atomic structure of mercury, it would *be* an atom of mercury, not an atom of iron "realized as" an atom of mercury or anything else. Atoms are differentiated from one another strictly on the basis of physical-domain criteria.<sup>8</sup> This is not the case for morphemes, which must be differentiated based on the viewpoint of the observer (again, see Saussure 1959:8), that is, based on *properties of the observer projected out onto*

<sup>7</sup> The parallel is not complete, of course: mathematicians do not make any claim that imaginary numbers can be observed (in the scientific sense), though the vast majority of linguists claim morphemes can.

<sup>8</sup> One reviewer suggested that SPECIES in biology is an example of a category in science which is "fraught with difficulty." Considering the recent flap over the status of Pluto, I am surprised that the reviewer didn't choose the category PLANET in astronomy. The reason scientific categories can be problematical is simply because, as abstractions from the physical domain, in order to avoid all controversy, they require everyone in a scientific community to agree on what aspects of the physical domain are critical to the abstracted category: e.g., factors such as anatomy/behavior/DNA in the case of SPECIES; e.g., factors such as relative mass/distance from the sun/sweeping its orbit clear of debris in the case of PLANET.

*the external world*. It should now be clear why I refer to these as “damned abstractions”: they allow no real-world test. Their truth can be established only within a framework of prior assumptions in the logical domain. This means that someone operating in a different framework of assumptions can quite validly reject another person’s “damned abstractions.” It is even sometimes the case that a person operating within the same logical-domain framework as another can reject the other’s “damned abstractions” because the framework has been established in such a way as to make the truth of some statements unresolvable.<sup>9</sup>

3. DAMNED LYING ABSTRACTIONS. Finally, we can create an abstraction purely by assumption, or accept on faith that a non-physical reality—such as the ideal—exists, but then treat it (when convenient, *but only when convenient*) as if it were concrete. This is what I call a DAMNED LYING ABSTRACTION. We can take the case of ghosts, which are purportedly non-physical spirits, yet which also supposedly can be photographed (affect light waves) with just the right equipment (see, e.g., Kaczmarek 1998) or detected via the electromagnetic fields they supposedly generate (see, e.g., eHow Culture & Society Editor 1999). The problem is that if a ghost is a spirit, a non-physical entity, then it cannot affect light waves or emit electromagnetic radiation. We can take the case of the human soul, taken on faith by many to be an eternal, spiritual (non-material, and thus non-physical) entity. The idea that the existence of the soul could be proven by virtue of its possessing a weight of 21 grams entered the popular sphere about a hundred years ago (MacDougall 1907, discussed in McCrory 2008:381). The problem, of course, is that if the soul is eternal and undying, then it cannot be a physical entity, as real-world observation confirms that all physical entities are subject to formation, change, and eventual disintegration. What I call DAMNED LYING ABSTRACTIONS are attributed physical properties when it is convenient (when real-world confirmatory evidence is claimed), but which are then reasserted to be non-physical (spiritual, paranormal, etc.) when real-world evidence contradicts their existence. This insulates them from scientific testing.<sup>10</sup>

The two examples of *damned lying abstractions* I have just given—ghosts that can be photographed and souls that can be weighed—are of the sort most of my audience would dismiss as mere superstition, in both instances, popular distortions of religious ideas (ideas which, if considered strictly within a spiritual context, do not share the same flaws). But the same kind of thinking is much more pervasive than the “mere superstition” reaction suggests.

For example, in an academic forum at my institution, I once found myself discussing, with colleagues and graduate students, a book by an well-known author in the field of genre analysis; he was to be our guest speaker the following week. At one point in the book, the author (Swales, 1990:58) defined “genre” in terms of a community of writers (which he called a “discourse community”) and elsewhere defined “discourse community” in terms of the genre(s) used by its members (p. 24). I brought this up, thinking the circularity of

<sup>9</sup> This is a recurring theme of the entertaining volume *Gödel, Escher, Bach* by Hofstadter (1979). See especially Chapter 14 (Hofstadter 1979:438–460).

<sup>10</sup> Reruns of the *X-Files* television series provide a host of additional examples; pay particular attention to hypotheses put forward by the character of Fox Mulder.

definition was rather problematical. First, a colleague, while admitting the circularity, said that perhaps the circularity was “not a *vicious* circle.” I am sure I replied that I had no idea what other kind of circularity in reasoning there was—all logical circularities are equally problematical. It seemed to me that a theory of genres needed to define its terms on the basis of something external (properties of writers and texts) if it was to be a theory of something in the real world. The same colleague then suggested, “Perhaps it’s not a theory of anything; maybe it’s just a theory.” Swales’ book deals with people writing texts and about purported properties of those people and of the texts; to me this seems without question to be a theory of *something*. But there I was, hearing a colleague actually suggesting that perhaps it was not a theory of anything, that it might be “just a theory.” As I tried to find out what she meant (she was, by the way, a specialist in rhetorical theory), I eventually realized that she meant it was a theory that could claim on the one hand to deal with people and texts, but on the other hand, could retreat into being “not a theory of anything, just a theory” whenever it failed to deal with those people and texts in an adequate way. To be fair, when I mentioned this circularity to Swales in another context, to his credit he admitted it was a problem and said he hoped to solve the problem at a later time. Thus, in his willingness to alter his theory based on the presence of a circularity, Swales was *not* treating his theory of genres and discourse communities as a *damned lying abstraction*; but my colleague *was*.

There are analogous examples closer to home for theoretical linguistics, perhaps uncomfortably so for some. Reich (1973 *passim*) deals with the way the competence-performance distinction has been used to defend certain theories from observation. He shows very clearly that the competence-performance distinction is circular. He also notes that the theory of competence has been set up in such a way that it can be “not a theory of anything, just a theory,” whenever it needs to. Reich (1973:85) quotes Fodor and Garrett (1966:152)

The internal evidence in favor of the structural descriptions modern grammars generate is so strong that it is hard to imagine their succumbing to any purely experimental disconfirmation. Rather one would best interpret negative data as showing that an acceptable theory of the relation between competence and performance models will have to represent the relation as abstract, the degree of abstractness being proportional to the failure of formal features of derivations to correspond to performance variables.

Competence theory is assumed to be a theory of something abstract, performance theory, a theory of something concrete. Competence theory is assumed to relate somehow to performance theory. Finally, as Fodor and Garrett say here, any negative data just shows that the *relationship* of the competence theory to a performance theory is an abstract one. I am not even certain what that implies, other than what is already assumed: that a competence theory is not a theory of something in the physical domain. Yet Chomsky and others have for decades written of “empirical data” in support of their theories of linguistic competence. See, for example, the discussion of E-language and I-language in Chomsky (1986:19–36) and his follow-up on what he calls “empirical evidence” as the basis for I-language

(1986:36–46).<sup>11</sup> Thus, the competence-performance distinction is also an example of a *damned lying abstraction*.

Here is another example. The widely-accepted model of language learning in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) follows Chomsky's (1964:26) assumption of two separate "mental devices," one for language understanding and another *completely separate one* for language learning. The input for the language learning device is further assumed to be well-formed sentences in the language to be learned, or what Chomsky (1964:26) called the "primary linguistic data" (for an enumeration of quite a few examples of agreement by well-known authors in SLA, see Coleman 2005:205). Yet Klein's (1986:44) 'Chinese Room' thought experiment shows that "the primary linguistic data" cannot be sufficient for acquisition:

Suppose you were locked in a room and were continually exposed to the sound of Chinese coming from a loudspeaker; however long the experiment continued, you would not end up speaking Chinese... What makes learning possible is the information received *in parallel* to the linguistic input in the narrower sense (the sound waves).

Clearly, the input for SLA is not "the primary linguistic data", but sensory experience, any and all of it. Klein's Chinese Room thought experiment shows the earlier assumption—that input consists of "the primary linguistic data"—to be false.<sup>12</sup> Yet, more than twenty years later, that assumption remains firmly in place, not only by those in the Chomskyan camp, but generally within the field of SLA. The widely-held theory of the language learning device (or language acquisition device/LAD, as it is now more commonly known) is thus a *damned lying abstraction*, clung to despite its obvious conflict not only with Klein's Chinese Room thought experiment, but with observations of how people learn in the real world.

<sup>11</sup> To add to the problem, even the "empirical data" of most of linguistics is not evidence from the physical domain, as has been brought up numerous times (a very few examples include Botha 1970; Itkonen 1978, 1981; Yngve 1986, 1996; Coleman 1999, 2000, 2001). As Itkonen (1978:3) has said:

That, and only that, which happens or obtains in space and time can be *observed*... [I]ntuition, for instance, is not a form of observation. To call all ways of gaining knowledge by the same name, i.e., "observation," ...conceals important methodological differences.

An example sentence (or "data sentence"—call it what you will) like *John is eager to please* is not an observation of an event that occurs at some specific time and place. It is a generalization purporting to represent any and all of the possible occurrences of someone saying or writing *John is eager to please*. As such, the example sentence *John is eager to please* is not data from which an abstraction might be generalized, but is already an abstraction. Calling it "data" does not make it an observation in any useful sense. Nor does calling it "empirical evidence." The written sentence is a projection of properties of the observer onto the printed page.

<sup>12</sup> It is hard to understand why Klein's Chinese Room did not come onto the scene in the field of SLA like a thunderclap. His book was not published by a small or obscure press. See the References section of this paper.

4. ARE THE CONFUSIONS COMPLETELY ACCIDENTAL? Coleman (2004:331–32) argues that certain confusions in linguistics arise from a *false analogy*, i.e., observation : theory :: concrete : abstract. Although the analogy correctly attributes concreteness and abstractness as properties of observation and theory, respectively, it is a false analogy because it ignores the internal relationships that make it an analogy. *Abstractions* in science are generalized from observation; they thus concern physical-domain entities and are couched strictly in physical-domain terms. *Damned lying abstractions* are presented as scientific but are couched in logical-domain terms; thus when challenged by real-world observation, they can be withdrawn into the logical domain, protected by a security blanket of assumptions (as examples above demonstrate).

A key confusion can be traced back at least to Saussure (1959:15), who said, “Language is concrete, no less so than speaking. Linguistic signs... are not abstractions.” Saussure justifies this by arguing that linguistic signs “have their seat in the brain” and thus must be physically real. The problem with Saussure’s argument is that if valid, we would have to accept that *anything imagined* must be physically real. If you perceive a tap-dancing racehorse on my desk, we can agree that the neural events underlying the perception are physically real, but this is not the same as saying the racehorse is physically real.

Chomsky has continued this confusion, even seeming to exploit it. For example, He frequently refers to “mind/brain” as an entity, as if the two domains were one, as if anything real in the logical domain of the mind must also exist in the physical domain of the brain (Chomsky 1986 *passim*). Coleman (2001) shows that a similar confusion pervades linguistics texts throughout the whole twentieth century. But to take another example, the cool water in the hallucination of a person dying of thirst may exist in his mind, but that does not mean there is cool water in the brain—or anywhere else in his physical environment, for that matter.

In discussing the nature of scientific inquiry, Chomsky has made the claim that

On the factual side, there is no longer any concept of body, or matter, or “the physical.” There is just the world, with its various aspects: mechanical, ...organic, mental... (2002:68)

This is not at all the same as saying that cognitive experience depends upon neurology; it is much more than that. Chomsky has taken this idea further, saying,

The standard that inspired the modern scientific revolution was abandoned; the goal [now] is intelligibility of theories, *not of the world*. (ibid., emphasis added)

Any understanding of the world is testable by comparing its predictions against observation. Improving the “intelligibility of the world” simply means that we gain in terms of consistency between theoretical prediction and real-world observation. In contrast, the goal of “theoretical intelligibility” is dependent entirely upon a person’s *assumptions* of what constitutes “intelligibility” of a theory. Chomsky (1964:26) has made this explicit, saying, “In evaluating a particular generative grammar, we ask whether the information that it gives



us is correct, that is, whether it describes correctly *the linguistic intuition of the speaker* (emphasis added). The evaluation of the intelligibility of a theory, in his view, requires no more than a consensus among researchers, and failing that consensus, the ability of one to impose his own judgment of what constitutes the most intelligible theory upon his colleagues. Chomsky has replaced the criterion of acceptance in science with one that depends upon the power of an individual to influence others within his field.<sup>13</sup>

This is quite unlike practice in science, where predictions can be tested against observation. Chomsky says (1978:203), "No empirical evidence can be conclusive," but take the case in which counterevidence forces the rejection of a hypothesis; unless a flaw in the study that produced that data is uncovered, it does not matter how much new confirmatory evidence is produced. Negative evidence is indeed conclusive in science. This is not a problem specific to Chomskyan linguistics. See Coleman (2000 *passim*).

But there is more. Chomsky, like many, has taken the position that the linguist is in a position to judge whether certain data is "correct" or not:

A corpus may contain examples of deviant or ungrammatical sentences, and any rational linguist will recognize the problem and try to assign to observed examples their proper status. (1978:208)

In this he is not alone. As one reviewer has put it, "Tension between existing theoretical notions and the interpretation of 'facts' that arguably disconfirm them is a recurrent issue in linguistic theory" (Newbrook 2003).

With regard to this widespread practice in linguistics of judging the "correctness" of data, Ikonen has said:

When we observe linguistic occurrences... we... divide the spatiotemporal linguistic phenomena into three classes: correct, incorrect, and doubtful. In natural science the situation is different: everything that happens in the natural course of events is "correct." Therefore *the notion of correctness of data does not apply here at all*. In natural science only researchers can behave incorrectly. (1980:157–58)

Of course, Ikonen, recall, is speaking of "that which happens or obtains in space and time," while Chomsky's idea of empirical observation (invoking one's own intuition) is neither empirical nor observation in the sense of standard science. If the problem were Chomsky's alone, it would be of far less concern. But his influence on how linguistics has been conducted over the past half-century is undeniably great.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS. *Abstractions* (those of the first type) are typical in science, *damned abstractions* (those of the second type) are typical in mathematics and philosophy, and *damned lying abstractions* (those of the third type), are all too common in

---

<sup>13</sup> For an extended discussion of the issue of the criteria of acceptance of theories in science vs. philosophy, see for example Yngve (1996:64–77), his chapter titled, "How can we know what to believe?" See also Shermer (1997 *passim*).



domain-confused theories. Linguistics is certainly domain-confused (see Yngve 1996:23–33; see also Yngve 2004:109, fn. 16 and the discussion it refers to). Too often, linguists create abstractions by assumption, then generalize further abstractions from them, mistakenly thinking of the new generalizations as scientific theories. They are not: scientific theories are generalized from observations of the physical domain. Abstract linguistic theories drawn only from prior abstractions and then defended from scientific evidence by a retreat into the logical domain are the most dangerous, those I call *damned lying abstractions*. The only escape from the dilemma we have created is to make a serious effort to couch linguistic theory in terms of things that are truly observable in the physical domain: people communicating in real-world environments. The framework presented by Yngve (1996) is one way to achieve this. He suggests couching linguistic theories in terms of *linkages*, which consist of *participants* (models of the people who are communicating), *props* (models of the relevant objects), and channels (models energy flow among the people and objects), within a *setting* (a model of the other relevant aspects of the environment). I have given one such example above. In papers published in other LACUS Forum volumes, various authors have also shown how linguistic analyses can be couched entirely in physical-domain terms. Further, examples in Yngve (1996) and papers in Yngve and Wąsik (2004) also illustrate ways linguistics can truly become a science of people communicating, utilizing *scientific abstraction* and thus avoid creating theories consisting of *damned lying abstractions*.



## REFERENCES

- BOTHA, RUDOLPH P. 1970. *The methodological status of grammatical argumentation*. The Hague: Mouton.
- CARROLL, LEWIS. 1958. *Symbolic logic*, 4th ed. New York: Dover.  
<http://durendal.org:8080/lcsl/SymbolicLogic.txt> (retrieved January 17, 2009).
- . 1960. *The annotated Alice: Alice's adventures in Wonderland and through the looking-glass*. Introduction and notes by Martin Gardner. New York: Bramhall House.
- CHOMSKY, NOAM. 1964. *Current issues in linguistic theory*. The Hague: Mouton.
- . 1978. On the biological basis of language capacities. In *Psychology and biology of language and thought: Essays in honor of Eric Lenneberg*, ed. G. A. Miller & E. Lenneberg, 199–220. New York: Academic Press.
- . 1986. *Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin, and use*. New York: Praeger.
- . 2002. *On nature and language*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- COLEMAN, DOUGLAS W. 1999. Assumptions, hypotheses, and theories in “applied” vs. “theoretical” linguistics. *LACUS forum* 25:461–472.
- . 2000. Linguistic data and its uses: The problem of conflating “data” and “examples”. *LACUS forum* 26:71–80.
- . 2001. DATA and SCIENCE in introductory linguistics textbooks. *LACUS forum* 27:75–85.

- . 2004. Linguistic meaning in the physical domain. *LACUS forum* 30:331–41.
- . 2005. The nature of language learning input. *LACUS forum* 31:203–13.
- DAY, CHARLES. 1999. Creating and characterizing individual molecular bonds with a scanning tunneling microscope. <http://www.physics.uci.edu/~wilsonho/No100.htm> (accessed June 5, 2008).
- D'ESPAGNAT, BERNARD. 1979. The quantum theory and reality. *Scientific American* 241(5):158–81.
- eHow Culture & Society Editor. 1999. How to take an EMF reading to show evidence of ghosts. eHow / Demand Media Knowledge. [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2052468\\_take-emf-reading-show-evidence.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2052468_take-emf-reading-show-evidence.html) (accessed June 6, 2008).
- FODOR, JERRY & MERRILL GARRETT. 1966. Some reflections on competence and performance. In *Psycholinguistic papers*, ed. John Lyons & R. J. Wales, 135–79. Chicago: Aldine.
- GOULD, STEPHEN J. 1987. *An urchin in the storm: Essays about books and ideas*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- HOFSTADTER, DOUGLAS R. 1979. *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An eternal golden braid*. New York: Random House / Vintage.
- ITKONEN, ESA. 1978. *Grammatical theory and metascience: A critical investigation into the methodological and philosophical foundations of "autonomous linguistics."* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- . 1980. Second rebuttal [to Dahl, 1980]. In *Evidence and argumentation in linguistics*, ed. Thomas A. Perry, 157–62. New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- . 1981. The concept of linguistic intuition. In *A festschrift for native speaker*, ed. Florian Coulmas. The Hague: Mouton.
- KACZMAREK, DALE. 1998. Ghost photographs. <http://www.ghostresearch.org/ghostpics/> (accessed June 6, 2008).
- KLEIN, WOLFGANG. 1986. *Second language acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- LEWIS, C. S. 1956. *Till we have faces*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- . 1994. *Voyage of the dawn treader*. New York: HarperCollins.
- MACDOUGALL, D. 1907. Hypothesis concerning soul substance together with experimental evidence of such substance. *American medicine* 13:240–43.
- MCCRORY, P. 2008. Blinded by the light (editorial). Reprinted from *British journal of sports medicine* 2004(38):381. <http://bjsm.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/38/4/381.pdf> (accessed June 6, 2008).
- NEWBROOK, MARK. 2003. A meeting of tongues [Review of *Contact linguistics: Bilingual encounters and grammatical outcomes*, by Carol Myers-Scotton (2002)]. From Times Higher Education (on-line), February 14, 2003. <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=174710&sectioncode=38>.
- REICH, PETER. 1973. Competence, performance, and relational networks. In *Stratificational linguistics*, ed. Adam Makkai & David G. Lockwood, 85–91. Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press.

- SAUSSURE, FERDINAND DE. 1959. *Course in general linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- SHERMER, MICHAEL. 1997. *Why people believe weird things*. New York: W. H. Freeman.
- SWALES, JOHN. 1990. *Genre analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- YNGVE, VICTOR H. 1986. *Linguistics as a science*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.
- . 1996. *From grammar to science: New foundations for general linguistics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- . 2004. An outline of hard-science phonetics-phonology. In Yngve & Wąsik, 87–112.
- . 2006. Formalizing the observer in hard-science linguistics. *LACUS forum* 32:267–76.
- YNGVE, VICTOR H. & ZDZISŁAW WĄSIK, eds. 2004. *Hard-science linguistics*. New York: Continuum.





## APPROCHE INTERLOCUTIVE DE L'IMPERFECTIVITE

CATHERINE DOUAY  
*Université d'Amiens*

DANIEL ROULLAND  
*Université de Rennes*

POUR GUILLAUME (1969:46sq.), est aspectuelle toute différenciation inscrite dans le « temps impliqué » par le sémantème verbal<sup>1</sup>, le « temps expliqué » étant l'époque où le discours situe le procès. Il n'y a donc pas de différence de nature entre aspect et temps, mais de lieu d'application. La distinction radicale est entre le temps décadent, attaché au passé et à l'accompli, et le temps incident attaché à l'accomplissement. Appliquée à l'aspect, elle provoque la distinction entre indéterminé (imperfectif) et déterminé (perfectif), et appliquée au temps elle oppose par exemple l'imparfait et le passé simple en français. On peut ainsi malgré les différences de distribution entre impliqué et expliqué considérer ce qui est commun à l'imperfectif russe, à l'imparfait français et à la forme progressive anglaise, et que nous appellerons l'imperfectivité.

Classiquement, l'imperfectivité offre une vision sécante de l'événement en distinguant au sein du procès une partie d'accompli et une partie d'inaccompli<sup>2</sup>:



Ce qui est symbolisé par les pointillés est vu comme le *déroulement ultérieur* du procès qui aurait été entamé dans la partie pleine mais interrompu<sup>3</sup>. Les modèles anaphoristes<sup>4</sup> contestent l'aspectualité, mais ils n'échappent pas non plus à cette prédétermination des pointillés de la figure: la partie pleine y est remplacée par un « antécédent », qui servirait de « point d'ancrage », et serait ou bien un dire antérieur, ou bien un contexte, ou encore une situation. Accompli et inaccompli changent de nature, mais l'inaccompli est toujours vu en continuité par rapport à cet antécédent. Le terme même d'antécédent est symptomatique.

Or, penser l'imperfectivité comme une relation entre une antécédence et une subséquence, c'est poser la conclusion en même temps que les prémisses, et s'interdire de regarder de plus près le contenu des pointillés de la figure. Que le procès, s'il est interrompu à un moment de son parcours, puisse continuer sa trajectoire pareil à lui-même *malgré*

<sup>1</sup> Ces différenciations étant rendues le plus souvent de manière semi-lexicale (vocabulaire, dérivation, préverbes ou auxiliaires), les flexions étant plutôt réservées au « temps expliqué » (1969:49).

<sup>2</sup> Guillaume (1969:50). Cette figure ne tient pas compte de l'orientation du temps ou de l'opérativité, variable selon les analyses.

<sup>3</sup> Bres (2005:5) considère que l'accompli et l'inaccompli n'ont pas d'étendue, et que l'inaccompli est « ramifié ». Mais il s'agit toujours pour lui du même procès en continuité : « L'ouverture à droite implique que le devenir du procès comporte tous les dénouements possibles » (Patard 2007:260).

<sup>4</sup> Kleiber (2003).

*l'interruption* est un cas de figure statistiquement improbable. Le procès imperfectif n'est *justement pas* représenté comme poursuivant sa trajectoire normale et prévisible.

Dans Douay & Roulland (2008) nous avons montré que la forme progressive anglaise marque explicitement une discordance, plus ou moins importante, entre ce que nous appelons les « rôles » locutif et allocutif. La palette des effets de sens est large mais la valeur de base est constamment la même: une relation *différentielle* à l'origine de valeurs comparatives ou contrastives à des degrés divers<sup>5</sup>. L'hypothèse que nous proposons de développer ici est que ces valeurs se retrouvent dans l'imparfait français.

1. CONTRASTE INTERLOCUTIF. Les emplois de l'imparfait qui intéressent immédiatement notre analyse sont ceux d'imminence contrariée<sup>6</sup>:

- (1) [Le narrateur raconte à une amie comment la chute d'une bûche lui a évité d'être surpris « en flagrant délit » dans les bras de la femme de son ami Julien]:  
 ... Enfin, une minute de plus... vous comprenez, n'est-ce pas? Une minute de plus et... j'étais... non, elle était... pardon, c'est lui qui l'était!... ou plutôt qui l'aurait été, quand voilà qu'un bruit terrible nous fit bondir.  
 La bûche, oui, la bûche, madame, s'élançait dans le salon, renversant la pelle, le garde-feu, roulant comme un ouragan de flamme, incendiant le tapis et se gîtant sous un fauteuil qu'elle allait infailliblement flamber.  
 Je me précipitai comme un fou, et pendant que je repoussais dans la cheminée le tison sauveur, la porte brusquement s'ouvrit! Julien, tout joyeux, rentrait. Il s'écria : « Je suis libre, l'affaire est finie deux heures plus tôt! »  
 Oui, mon amie, sans la bûche, j'étais pincé en flagrant délit. Et vous apercevez d'ici les conséquences! (G. de Maupassant, *La Bûche*, 1882)

Ces imparfaits contrefactuels permettent d'évoquer (dramatiquement) un procès qui n'a pas eu lieu. Ils sont très fréquents à l'oral, par exemple sous une forme comme (2):

- (2) [Artisan à son client] Votre soudure là? Il suffisait de me le dire, et je vous la faisais tout de suite, et gratuitement en plus! (conversation)

Le conditionnel passé (« je vous l'aurais faite ») serait proche mais l'imparfait induit une *généralisation*. Ces imparfaits contrefactuels servent volontiers aux leçons et rappels à l'ordre:

- (3) [Capitaine au matelot] Heureusement que t'as pas touché à ce bout-là! Tu tirais dessus, et tu te prenais la bôme en pleine figure. Ça faisait pas un pli! (conversation)

<sup>5</sup> En russe, l'imperfectif est utilisé avec une négation polémique (Corre 2004:106) : A : *Сломал, теперь исправляй* [PERF] B : *Я его не сломал, его никто не сломал* [IMP] A : Tu as cassé, maintenant répare B : Je n'ai rien cassé, personne n'a rien cassé.

<sup>6</sup> Ou « contrecarrée », « conséquence infaillible » pour Grévisse, imparfait « fictif » pour Le Goffic (1986), « anticipatif » pour Wilmet (2003), ou « contrefactuel » pour Berthonneau & Kleiber (2006).

Ce qui compte, c'est l'évocation de conséquences évitées, comme le dit explicitement le personnage de Maupassant en (1).

Guillaume note la valeur contrefactuelle possible de l'imparfait mais il note aussi sa valeur possiblement factuelle:

- (4) *Un instant de plus, le train déraillait*, au sens de : aurait déraillé, mais n'a pas déraillé. (...) *Un instant après, le train déraillait* au sens de : le train dérailla, a déraillé. (Leçon du 26 janvier 1950)

Cette factualité retrouvée est très emphatique, chargée d'implications, porteuse d'effets d'annonce, etc.:

- (5) Or, un soir, la belle Irma, la maîtresse, disait-on, de M. Templier-Papon, le riche manufacturier, fit arrêter sa voiture en face de la Comédie, et descendant, eut l'air d'aller acheter du papier ou commander des cartes de visite chez M. Paulard, le graveur, cela pour passer devant les tables d'officiers et jeter au capitaine Épivent un regard qui voulait dire : « Quand vous voudrez » si clairement que le colonel Prune, qui buvait la verte liqueur avec son lieutenant-colonel, ne put s'empêcher de grogner :
- Cré cochon. A-t-il de la chance ce bougre-là?
- Le mot du colonel fut répété; et le capitaine Epivent ému de cette approbation supérieure, passa le lendemain, en grande tenue, et plusieurs fois de suite, sous les fenêtres de la belle.
- Elle le vit, se montra, sourit.
- Le soir même il était son amant. (G. de Maupassant, *Le lit* 29, 1884.)

Ces imparfaits sont dits « narratifs » ou « de rupture ». Bres (2005:47) note que cette appellation de Brunot & Bruneau (1947) est bien à interpréter dans le sens d'une discontinuité. D'ailleurs, pour conserver l'anaphore, Berthonneau & Kleiber sont contraints de l'assimiler à un « imparfait de clôture ». Desclés (2000:8) met en cause le principe de continuité anaphoriste : il s'agit pour lui de déclarer un « nouvel état ».

En (5), l'imparfait « était » au lieu de « fut » a deux vertus narratives: premièrement il porte un effet d'annonce, et deuxièmement il globalise en une seule mention-choc une collection plus ou moins importante de détails<sup>7</sup>. Avec l'imparfait de rupture, le narrateur fournit au lecteur une proposition qui entre en contradiction avec ses attentes ou ses anticipations, et est grossie d'une portée plus générale que la simple succession des procès. L'imparfait étend donc le procès jusqu'à un *horizon d'attente*. Or c'est précisément ce qu'il faisait dans le cas contrefactuel. Que le procès ait eu lieu ou non est important, mais cela ne change rien à la valeur de la forme.

Ainsi le cas factuel est autant fondé sur la discontinuité que le cas contrefactuel. Dans l'exemple (6), le narrateur annonce que les Panard retournent à Paris contrairement à leur projet de séjour. Narrativement, l'imparfait marque un retournement de situation:

<sup>7</sup> Ducrot (1979) développe cette notion de globalisation pour l'imparfait.

- (6) [Alors qu'ils viennent d'arriver dans leur chambre d'hôtel à Nice, les Panard sont, comme dans les autres hôtels où ils ont séjourné, incommodés par une odeur intolérable. C'est alors que M. Panard tombe sur un vieux journal démentant des rumeurs de choléra] :  
 Il fit un bond et s'écria :  
 « Madame Panard... Madame Panard... c'est le choléra... le choléra... le choléra... j'en étais sûr... Ne défaites pas nos malles... nous retournons à Paris tout de suite... tout de suite. »  
 Une heure plus tard, ils reprenaient le rapide, enveloppés dans une odeur asphyxiante de phénol. (G. de Maupassant, *Voyage de santé*, 1886).

L'alinéa devant « Une heure plus tard » signale pour Bres (2005:225) une légère discordance par rapport à la continuité des événements<sup>8</sup>, mais il est au contraire selon nous en parfaite concordance avec la valeur discontinuative, car il s'agit de mettre en valeur la proposition face à ce qui aurait dû ou pu se produire. Le procès marqué à l'imparfait est saillant et dramatisé. Ce sens est très proche du sens « correctif » :

- (7) [Au cours de la bataille de Waterloo, Napoléon distingue dans le lointain une silhouette qu'il croit être celle de son général Grouchy, mais il fait erreur : il s'agit de celle du prussien Blücher] :  
 Soudain, joyeux, il dit : Grouchy ! – C'était Blücher.  
 L'espoir changea de camp, le combat changea d'âme. (V. Hugo, *L'Expiation*)  
 (Bres 2003: 68; Patard 2007:120, exemple 153)

Le narrateur rectifie à l'adresse du lecteur la conclusion erronée du personnage, ce qui marque une contradiction par rapport à ses attentes<sup>9</sup>.

Dans l'exemple (8) enfin, seule la valeur contrastive de discontinuité permet de comprendre le recours à un imparfait. Il s'agit du tout début d'un article de presse sans aucun contexte avant:

- (8) Avec l'adoption de sa nouvelle « Déclaration de principes » - confirmant dans le texte l'orientation réformatrice appliquée depuis des années - le Parti socialiste affichait la priorité du sujet sur les luttes de personnes.  
 La lutte désormais ouverte entre Ségolène Royal et Bertrand Delanoë pour conquérir le PS risque de renvoyer rapidement les socialistes à une plus prosaïque guerre des chefs. Sur ce plan, un an après ce qui restera quand même comme une défaite historique majeure, la situation est loin de s'être décantée. Au contraire. Avec le recul, la campagne interne de 2006 pouvait encore s'apparenter à un débat idéologique entre le tenant d'un socialisme traditionnel (Laurent Fabius), un

<sup>8</sup> On a le même alinéa dans l'exemple (5).

<sup>9</sup> Voir Douay & Roulland (2008) pour une application de cette analyse à la forme progressive anglaise.



social-démocrate-libéral (Dominique Strauss-Kahn) et une démocrate « moderne » aussi ébouriffante que déconcertante (Ségolène Royal).

Aujourd'hui, on peine à distinguer les divergences politiques derrière les ambitions personnelles. (*Courrier Picard*, 18 Mai 2008)

Pour comprendre le premier imparfait (*affichait*), il faut attendre la suite de l'article où le journaliste déplore que la priorité aux idées soit *désormais* remplacée par une « *plus prosaïque* guerre des chefs ». De même, « *pouvait s'apparenter* » ne peut s'expliquer que par contraste avec ce qui est dit ensuite de la situation actuelle<sup>10</sup> (« Aujourd'hui, on peine à distinguer ... »). La globalisation, qui va de pair avec la discontinuité, est particulièrement visible dans le paragraphe d'introduction de l'article.

2. UNIFICATION ET FICTIONNALITÉ. La discontinuité est cependant parfois moins visible. Il s'agit de cas typiquement oraux, donc rarement pris en compte dans les corpus écrits, mais extraordinairement fréquents dans la pratique quotidienne, comme l'imparfait préludique:

- (9) [Si on joue au docteur] J'ÉTAIS *malade*, et tu APPELAIS *le docteur*. – [Si on joue au gendarme et au voleur:] *Moi, j'ÉTAIS le gendarme, et tu VOLAIS un vélo. (...)*. (Grévisse 1986:1292)

Cet emploi est classé par Patard (2007:279, n.16) comme rare<sup>11</sup>. Il s'agit pourtant d'un des premiers emplois des enfants<sup>12</sup>. Il sert à initialiser un jeu et à planter les éléments du décor. Il ne s'agit pas d'un temps du passé avec lequel on proposerait de rejouer une énième partie. C'est parfois le cas, et de plus les enfants reproduisent volontiers des situations, mais il peut tout aussi bien s'agir d'un jeu inédit. Le protocole, tout en fixant des marges d'action propres au type d'acteurs et au décor, ne régit pas le déroulement du jeu. Il s'agit donc d'imparfaits créatifs visant à codifier ce qui va s'ensuivre.

C'est cette codification qui doit retenir l'attention. L'imparfait laisse la place à l'initiative dans des limites fixées par un contrat initial qui lie les joueurs. Dans les exemples (9), le jeu doit se dérouler dans le cadre des rapports docteur/malade ou gendarme/voleur. Donc la proposition à l'imparfait globalise une situation-cadre à l'intérieur de laquelle les divers événements du jeu seront interprétés. A partir du moment où on « était malade », et où on « appelait le docteur », on fera ce qui peut se passer dans ce cadre. Donc la codification est le reflet d'une unification scénique. C'est le principe d'une fiction<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Il apparaît donc essentiel pour comprendre une forme d'imparfait de l'appréhender dans un contexte qui ne se réduise pas à ce qui précède l'énoncé à l'imparfait, la valeur contrastive n'étant parfois perceptible que par rapport à ce qui est dit dans le contexte après.

<sup>11</sup> Au même titre que les emplois « contrefactuel, atténuatif, forain et hypocoristique ». L. Rosier (2005:125) qualifie les emplois forains et hypocoristiques « jadis pointés comme « très vivants » (Damourette & Pichon) » de « littéraires » et « théâtraux », qui ne « bénéficient pas d'attestations très nombreuses ».

<sup>12</sup> Riegel et al. ne le citent pas et Bres ne l'étudie pas davantage, « faute de données suffisantes ».

<sup>13</sup> Cet imparfait est initialement analogue de celui qui introduit le conte (« Il était une fois... »).

Il s'agit pour les enfants de jouer en disant qu'ils jouent. Ils disent d'ailleurs souvent « on dirait que (tu es/étais la maîtresse...) ». Le jeu, malgré toute son originalité, est ramené par la parole à un canevas relationnel pourvu de frontières. En d'autres termes, l'imparfait, tout en ouvrant des perspectives, garantit que les relations demeurent des relations fictives. Ces imparfaits sont volontiers réservés aux jeux d'enfants (sans qu'ils appartiennent à une grammaire enfantine), sans doute parce qu'ils sont surtout rassurants<sup>14</sup> : les enfants ont besoin de savoir qu'ils jouent un rôle et que ce n'est pas « pour de vrai ». Quand un enfant dit : « j'étais malade », il dit « faisons *comme si* j'étais malade... ». L'imparfait est donc une marque explicite de fiction comme l'explique Boillat (2001) :

- (10) L'expression « Il était une fois », trait typique de la fable, est (...) l'illustration la plus patente de la suspension, dans les textes de fiction, de la valeur prétéritive de l'imparfait. En effet, l'indication « une fois » étant très floue et donc peu pertinente pour un repérage temporel, la formule consiste plutôt à annoncer l'irréalité de ce qui lui fait suite qu'à livrer une information sur l'univers diégétique. Il n'est en ce sens pas étonnant que les enfants recourent fréquemment à l'imparfait pour se construire un univers imaginaire en utilisant des formules comme « J'étais le docteur et toi le malade... ». L'usage qu'ils font de ce temps verbal ne doit bien sûr pas être compris dans le sens d'une valeur passée effective, c'est-à-dire comme un désir d'être ceux qu'ils ne sont plus, mais comme une projection dans un univers second (où « docteur » et « malade » deviennent des rôles). Avec cette particularité de l'imparfait, on touche probablement à l'un des éléments-clés de la définition du phénomène de la fiction.

Cette fictionnalité de l'imparfait est relevée à propos de certains cas d'emploi, pas d'autres. Il ne faut pas la prendre en effet au sens d'une irréalité, ce qui contrevient à de nombreux cas non contrefactuels : ce n'est pas la réalité du procès qui régit l'imparfait, mais la contradiction apportée à la contingence. Cette contingence est attribuée au pôle allocutif  $\beta$ . On peut parler de fictionnalité au sens d'une véritable *sur-assertion*.

Un autre imparfait réputé difficile à analyser est l'imparfait hypocoristique :

- (11) Comme il était sage ! Comme il aimait bien sa maman ! (Grévisse 1986:1292)  
 (12) (à un chien) A qui c'était la queuequeue ? (R. Gotainer, *Youpi*, de Saussure & Sthioul 2005)

Il est interprétable comme hypocoristique uniquement dans une adresse directe de la part du locuteur à un interlocuteur, déclaré du même coup incapable de dialoguer (petit bébé, animal). Le locuteur ne reprend pas anaphoriquement un discours supposé de l'autre : ce discours n'a jamais existé, même de façon fictive. Au contraire, le locuteur donne immédiatement forme à une expression non verbalisée<sup>15</sup>. Il est créatif en ce qu'il rend explicite et

<sup>14</sup> Les adultes assignent les rôles au présent (« moi, je suis ceci, et toi tu es cela »).

<sup>15</sup> La même analyse pourrait s'appliquer à au discours indirect libre qui permet au narrateur de verbaliser des pensées ou sensations confuses ou semi conscientes dans l'esprit d'un personnage.

compréhensible un ensemble de signes ou de comportements: il parle à la place de l'autre. Il s'agit là encore d'unifier par la parole: la discontinuité est déclarée et trouve immédiatement une solution par une rationalisation du comportement observé. Il faut ajouter que la maman de (11) utilise l'imparfait en s'adressant à son bébé. Si elle se tourne vers son mari pour lui dire que le bébé est sage et l'aime, elle ne l'utilisera plus. L'imparfait fonctionne exclusivement dans le cadre où la maman *interprète* les signes en provenance du bébé. Ce qu'elle globalise (théorise), c'est donc le dialogue lui-même. L'imparfait lui sert à définir un cadre privé qui *simule* les conditions de la conversation. Il disparaît dès que la conversation n'est plus simulée.

Le locuteur tient alors les deux bouts de la chaîne, les deux rôles à la fois, le rôle locutif et le rôle allocutif. C'est ce qui caractérise l'imperfectif et qui explique la contradiction qu'on y trouve parfois: la forme substitue explicitement et de manière différentielle une parole locutive à une parole allocutive. C'est ce qui explique qu'on ait des avis divergents parfois sur la question de savoir si l'imparfait relègue un procès à l'arrière-plan ou au contraire le promeut au premier plan. Il peut faire les deux, puisqu'il a une valeur relationnelle contrastive par définition.

La valeur d'*unification contrastive* est présente également dans les imparfaits d'habitude qui « résument » des scènes, ou des comportements, en opposant à la réalité multiple, fragmentée, complexe une représentation unifiée, intégrante, intériorisée sans rupture:

- (13) L'été vint. Les Mérout n'avaient pas de plus grande joie que de recevoir leurs amis dans leur propriété de Tourbeville. C'était une joie intime et saine, une joie de braves gens et de propriétaires campagnards. Ils allaient au-devant des invités jusqu'à la gare voisine et les ramenaient dans leur voiture, guettant les compliments sur leur pays, sur la végétation, sur l'état des routes dans le département, sur la propreté des maisons des paysans, sur la grosseur des bestiaux qu'on apercevait dans les champs, sur tout ce qu'on voyait par l'horizon.  
(G. de Maupassant, *L'Ami Joseph*, 1883)

L'imparfait d'habitude a plusieurs valeurs: en (13) il s'agit d'installer les Mérout dans la narration en sélectionnant des caractéristiques pertinentes pour la suite de l'histoire. D'autres traduisent une discontinuité forte quand ils soulignent une différence entre les scènes qu'on évoque et le moment présent où le comportement n'est plus. L'imparfait est alors volontiers nostalgique. Il peut aussi se teinter de nuances modales quand il marque l'obstination du sujet, la permanence de ses comportements, et la liste des cas contrastifs est loin d'être close.

3. SYSTÈME ET INTERLOCUTION. Notre analyse rejoint les concepts les plus assurés de la théorie générale des systèmes (Luhmann 1995). L'imperfectivité est un marquage différentiel en ce qu'il reproduit, dans le système de la langue, la différence entre le système et ce qui n'est pas lui, c'est-à-dire son environnement. Dans notre modèle, nous concevons cette différence comme une bipolarisation entre deux positions systématiques: un horizon locutif ( $\alpha$ ) et allocutif ( $\beta$ ). Le rapport de réciprocité direct entre  $\alpha$  et  $\beta$  institue une relation

d'interlocution centrale dont d'autres relations sont distinguées. Parmi celles-ci, en français, l'imparfait marque une dissociation entre les deux rôles interlocutifs et une dominance de la parole locutive  $\alpha$ .

Cette définition générale s'applique aussi aux formes verbales imperfectives de l'anglais et du russe<sup>16</sup>. L'imperfectivité joue toujours le même rôle contrastif, même alors que son champ d'application peut naturellement varier grandement dans le détail. Aussi est-il important de noter que cette valeur différentielle est *relative*: le contraste peut s'établir par rapport à n'importe quel niveau du co(n)texte, et les formes imperfectives peuvent créer elles-mêmes les conditions de leur propre apparition. Certains imparfaits français n'ont parfois d'autre sens que de marquer une posture personnelle différentielle (effet d'annonce, imparfait forain ou agressif, etc.).

La prise en compte en système de l'interlocution reste paradoxalement anecdotique en linguistique. Guillaume refusait de l'intégrer, car il craignait de réduire la langue à « une banale convention d'utilité intervenue entre les humains » (1969:240). Il y était pourtant attentif, ainsi qu'en témoigne l'extrait suivant:

- (14) Il est impossible de concevoir le langage sans une certaine solution du problème de la personne vu que le langage met en face l'une de l'autre une personne agissante, parlante et une personne agissante, écoutante, par son audition. Le langage est essentiellement une relation entre personnes (Guillaume, Leçon du 30 avril 1948 – C).

Décrire le système comme une relation entre les deux pôles interlocutifs  $\alpha$  et  $\beta$  nous paraît être de nature à nous faire progresser dans cette voie.



## RÉFÉRENCES

- BERTHONNEAU, ANNE-MARIE & GEORGES KLEIBER. 2006. Sur l'imparfait contrefactuel. *Travaux de linguistique* 53(2):7–65.
- BOILLAT, ALAIN. 2001. *La Fiction au cinéma*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- BRES, JACQUES. 2003. Temps verbal et co(n)texte. *Langue française* 138.
- . 2005. *L'imparfait dit narratif*. Paris: CNRS Editions.
- BRUNOT FERDINAND & CHARLES BRUNEAU. 1947/1969. *Précis de grammaire historique de la langue française*. Paris: Massin et Cie.
- CORRE, ERIC. 2004. Aspects, négation et complémentation: des cas de synonymie. *Cercles* 9:95–120.

<sup>16</sup> Douay/Roulland (2009, sous presse).

- DESCLÉS, JEAN-PIERRE. 2000. Imparfait narratif et imparfait de nouvel état en français. *Temps et temporalité*. 10e Colloque de linguistique romane et slave. Cracovie, Pologne, 21–23 septembre.
- DOUAY, CATHERINE & DANIEL ROULLAND. 2008. L'Autre dans la langue: de la co-énonciation à l'interlocution. *Revue du GRAAT* 38:15–33.
- & ———. 2009. L'anaphore en question: réexamen de l'imperfectif verbal et de l'indéfini nominal. Communication SELOEN-Université Lille 3, 12 Mai 2006 (à paraître).
- DUCROT, OSWALD. 1979. L'imparfait en français. *Linguistische berichte* 69:1–23.
- GRÉVISSE, MAURICE. 1986. *Le bon usage: Précis de grammaire française*. Editions Duculot. 12ème édition refondue par André Goosse. Louvain-la-Neuve.
- GUILLAUME, GUSTAVE. 1969. *Langage et science du langage*. 2ème édition. Paris : Nizet et Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.
- . 1971/2005. *Leçons de linguistique de Gustave Guillaume*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.
- KLEIBER, GEORGES. 2003. Entre les deux mon coeur balance ou l'imparfait entre aspect et anaphore. *Langue française* 138:8–19.
- LE GOFFIC, PIERRE. 1986. Que l'imparfait n'est pas un temps du passé. In *Points de vue sur l'imparfait*, ed. Pierre Le Goffic, 55–69. Caen : Centre de Publications de l'Université de Caen.
- LUHMANN, NIKLAS. 1995. *Social systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (German ed. 1984.)
- PATARD, ADELIN. 2007. *L'un et le multiple : L'imparfait de l'indicatif en français, valeur en langue et usages en discours*. Montpellier: thèse de l'Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier.
- ROSIER, LAURENCE. 2005. L'imparfait ventriloque? In *Les nouveaux développements de l'imparfait*. *Cahiers Chronos* 14, ed. Emmanuelle Labeau & Pierre Larrivée, 121–133. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: Rodopi.
- SAUSSURE, LOUIS DE & BERTRAND STHIOUL. 2005. Imparfait et enrichissement pragmatique. In *Les nouveaux développements de l'imparfait*. *Cahiers Chronos* 14, ed. Emmanuelle Labeau & Pierre Larrivée. Amsterdam- Philadelphia: Rodopi.
- WILMET, MARC. 2003. *Grammaire critique du français*. 3ème édition. Paris: Duculot.





## CAN VS. BE ABLE TO: WHY “SEMI-MODALS” ARE NOT MODALS

RYAN FISHER & PATRICK J. DUFFLEY

*Université Laval*

IN ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL STUDIES ON THE TOPIC, Palmer (2001:4) presents modal auxiliaries as one of the ways in which languages deal grammatically with the cross-language category of “modality,” a category of the clause which denotes “the status of the proposition that describes the event.” The main division within this category is that between *realis*, defined as portraying situations “as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through direct perception,” and *irrealis*, which portrays situations “as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through the imagination.” Palmer recognizes that he is taking a typological approach to modality and using categories that are external to the linguistic system of any particular language—he calls them “notional” (18) to avoid becoming embroiled in the semantics-pragmatics debate. The present paper intends to go beyond the purely notional-typological level, building on the insights offered by the *realis/irrealis* distinction, but delving into the language-specific semantics of English in order to propose a more complete and explanatorily adequate account of the difference in behaviour between the modal auxiliary CAN and its closely related semi-modal cousin BE ABLE TO.

In two insightful papers (1977, 1980), Palmer explores the contrast between these two items, a treatment which is summarized and completed with a few further minor observations in the second edition of his *Modality and the English Modals* (1990). In the 1977 article Palmer offers an explanation for the fact that we cannot normally say *\*I ran fast and could catch the bus*, suggesting that CAN is not used if there is an implication of actuality (i.e., that the event actually took place) in the past, because the factual status of the event is known and a modal verb is inappropriate in such circumstances. In contrast, it is perfectly possible to say *I ran fast and was able to catch the bus*, because BE ABLE TO is not a modal. In the negative, *I ran fast, but I couldn't catch the bus* is also acceptable, since negative modality implies negative actuality (if the subject couldn't perform the event, it follows that he didn't).

In his 1980 paper, Palmer completes the picture, bringing out two further points. He shows first of all that while the strongest restriction on CAN in terms of the expression of actuality is with single actions in the past, even in other circumstances BE ABLE TO may be preferred if the implication of actuality is strong. This occurs in the present tense in cases such as:

- (1) By bulk buying in specific items, Lasky's are able to cut prices on packages by as much as 30 per cent or so. (Palmer 1980:96)

It also occurs in the past with reference to repeated actions in cases where *could* is the more usual form (cf. *I could get up and go to the kitchen whenever I wanted to*) if there is a very strong implication of actuality:

- (2) Most people worked harder than me during the University, of course, and when it came to exams, they were able to draw not just upon two weeks of knowledge. They were able to draw upon three years of knowledge. (*ibid*:95)

The second point which Palmer makes is that the conditioning factor permitting the occurrence of CAN referring to single actions in the past must be extended from 'negation' to include the notions of the almost nonoccurrence of the event in the past (3), its occurrence under difficult circumstances (4), the restriction of its occurrence to a particular agent (5), and the questioning of its occurrence (6).

- (3) I could just reach the branch. (95)  
 (4) He was laughing so much he could hardly get a word out. (94)  
 (5) Well she was the only one of the family there who could do it. (94)  
 (6) Could you reach it? (92)

Palmer concludes that:

[I]t is fairly clear, then, that it is semantic negation that is at issue, but in a wide sense, to include not only nonoccurrence of the event but also its occurrence under difficult circumstances, or its "almost nonoccurrence." (1980:95)<sup>1</sup>

While Palmer's account is basically sound, the relation which it suggests between the facts of usage described and the meanings of the linguistic units involved needs to be made much clearer, especially in the case of BE ABLE TO. Neither the complete range of its uses nor the contribution of the language-specific semantic content of the words constituting this phrase to its expressive capacities in discourse are considered, and so no real explanation is offered as to how or why it is suppletive for CAN in certain contexts. Westney (1995), in an attempt to build on Palmer's actuality hypothesis, claims that actuality must be seen as an idiosyncratic feature of the meaning of the BE ABLE TO construction. This requires clarification, however, since actuality can also be associated with other semi-modal constructions such as HAVE GOT TO and HAVE TO (cf. *I had to leave work at 3:30 yesterday to pick up my daughter Rosalie*), and so would not seem to be merely idiomatic with BE ABLE TO. As for CAN and COULD themselves, it is possible to develop even further some of Palmer's intuitions about the restrictions which apply to these forms as a consequence of the type of meaning expressed by the modals.

As a first point, the notions of "semantic negation" or "affective contexts" (1990:9495), which Palmer rightly invokes as a factor allowing the use of COULD, are much broader than his examples show. COULD also occurs in reference to single past actions in many other types of contexts:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Palmer (1990:95): "What all of these have in common is that the possibility is in some way qualified, or that there is a suggestion that the event almost did not take place, or that it took place in a minimal way."



- (7) The most the doctor could tell me was that she was very sick.
- (8) I had to wait outside for two hours before I could talk to her.
- (9) He got to the scene of the accident sooner than I could.

The best term to describe the full range of the uses of *COULD* referring to a single past action is Jacobsson's notion of "nonassertiveness" (1974:62). This can embrace both the interrogative usage illustrated in (6) and the uses given in (7)–(9) above: in (7) the doctor couldn't tell the speaker any more than that she was very sick; in (8) the speaker couldn't talk to her for two hours; in (9) the speaker couldn't get to the scene of the accident sooner than the other person referred to.

Seeing these uses of *COULD* in terms of nonassertiveness has the further advantage of allowing one to relate them to the modal uses of the verbs *NEED* and *DARE*. As Jacobsson has shown for *NEED*, such usage occurs only in contexts in which the notion (of necessity or obligation) is "not asserted but denied, questioned, conceded (in concessive clauses), or represented as a mere conception rather than as a positive fact" (1974:62). He gives the following list of contexts where he has found *NEED* auxiliary, which encompasses all of the usage where *COULD* doubles for *WAS ABLE TO* in reference to single actions in the past:

- (10) a. Need I be present?
- b. He needn't come.
- c. No one need know.
- d. I need hardly say how glad I am.
- e. He need only state his opinion clearly.
- f. Standards are lower than they need be.
- g. His book covers most that need be said on the subject.
- h. I have half an hour to spare before I need go.
- i. It is embarrassing that such a truth need be stated at all.
- j. However much need be said, let it wait.

In contrast, the auxiliary use of *NEED* does not occur in pure affirmative contexts:

- (11) \*She need be operated on right away.

This behaviour closely resembles that of *COULD* which, as seen above, is not used in assertive contexts when the infinitive evokes a single action actually realized in the past.

Based on the pattern of usage found with *NEED* and *DARE*, it has been argued that the notion of nonassertiveness is a basic and inherent characteristic of the modal auxiliaries, which are defined semantically by their opposition to reality (Duffley 1994). Usage with *COULD* in reference to single actions in the past provides another confirmation of this analysis and so should be correlated with the modal uses of *NEED* and *DARE*, which Palmer's treatment of the question neglects to do. *NEED* and *DARE* denote notions which refer a priori to realities, and it is only when they are not asserted that they can be construed as mere potentialities equivalent to the modal auxiliaries. *CAN/COULD*, on the other hand, evoke



**Figure 1.** *Conceptual relations involved in modal usage of DARE.*

potentiality by nature, and the restrictions we have observed on the use of *COULD* when its infinitive refers to a single past action are the product of a semantic conflict between the notion of past possibility and that of past realization: if the action really happened at a particular moment in the past, what is the point of treating it as merely possible? On the other hand, it does make sense to evoke a single action in the past as having been impossible, thereby implying that it was not performed.

While the explanation for the use of *COULD* in the negative is quite easy to follow, the motivation for the acceptability of *COULD* in non-assertive contexts where the actuality of the infinitive's event is implied, such as (3)–(5) and (7)–(9) above, requires deeper consideration. Palmer suggests that it is the fact that in all of these uses “the possibility is in some way qualified, or there is a suggestion that the event almost did not take place, or that it took place in a minimal way,” which accounts for there being a “focus on the modality, whereas in the examples where *could* would not be used the focus of attention is more on the actuality itself” (1990:95–96). This certainly points in the right direction but it still leaves a number of questions without a precise answer. Why does the suggestion that the event almost did not take place call to mind the notion of possibility? Why does restricting the predication to a subset of a larger set of subjects by means of a word like *only*, as in (5) above, cause a “focus on the modality” even though the subject singled out actually did perform the event denoted by infinitive?

Since it involves the conditioning factor of non-assertiveness, modal usage with *DARE* and *NEED* sheds considerable light on this question. Consider (12) below:

- (12) But launching a new cigarette in today's climate of disapproval requires finesse.  
The company is advertising its Premiers as ‘cleaner smoke’, the furthest it dare go.  
(*The Economist*, Sept. 17, 1988, p. 33)

This use obviously implies that the company in question dare not go any further than it has, but the sentence would still seem to assert real daring up to that point. Such cases can best be analyzed by taking into account the fact that some limit or restriction is imposed on the daring here. In (12), therefore, daring is declared to be impossible beyond the limit of advertising the new cigarette as a cleaner smoke, a situation which can be depicted by the diagram in **Figure 1** so as to visualize the conceptual relations which it involves.

The important point here is that daring is discussed in terms of its possibility beyond the limit. Since this is the case, it is only natural that it should also be evoked in terms of its possibility inside the limit as well. It is argued here that the same thing occurs with *COULD* in uses such as (5) above: if doing the action is evoked as having been impossible for the other members of the family, it is logical for it to be discussed in terms of its possibility for

the one person who was actually able to do it. As for (3), it is the fact that the adverb *just* implies the possibility of nonoccurrence which leads the speaker to see the occurrence in terms of its possibility rather than its reality (moreover, to say that a single past action was just barely possible implies that it actually occurred). The idea that an event occurred only with considerable difficulty (cf. *hardly*) also calls to mind the state of affairs prior to its existence when it was a mere possibility which very well might not have become an actuality due to the obstacles to its occurrence.

To sum up, there is a semantic aversion to using COULD when the infinitive's event corresponds to a single action which really took place in the past, since if a singular action really happened, one does not see the point of representing it as merely possible. This aversion is not felt, however, when the possibility of a singular action in the past is not asserted straightforwardly but only in a qualified manner.<sup>2</sup> This can involve the assertion of possibility up to a certain limit, or its restriction to certain subjects, notions which both imply impossibility outside of these limits or restrictions, and therefore lead the speaker to view the situation in terms of possibility rather than reality. It can also involve the assertion of a possibility which just barely escaped the realm of impossibility, or did so only with difficulty, which also leads quite naturally to viewing the actually realized past action in terms of its possibility rather than its reality.

We can now turn our attention to BE ABLE TO, the construction which is suppletive for COULD in past contexts where a singular action was actually realized. The first point which must be made is that a sentence such as (13) is in fact ambiguous without a context:

- (13) He was able to lift 200 pounds.

This sentence can imply that the person in question actually did lift this weight on a particular occasion, as in Palmer's examples; but it can also evoke the subject's merely having the ability to lift 200 pounds, a sense which overlaps with that of COULD expressing past ability. This is perhaps clearer in (14), said by a professor who had just finished giving the explanations required for the homework being assigned:

- (14) You are now able to do Exercise 9.

Here BE ABLE TO clearly does not imply actuality.<sup>3</sup> The real question to be asked in comparing COULD and WAS ABLE TO is therefore this: why can WAS ABLE TO evoke either 'he

<sup>2</sup> It goes without saying that there is no resistance to evoking the past possibility of a single event whose actualization is denied or questioned.

<sup>3</sup> This would also be the interpretation Palmer's example *Are you able to take that on?* (1990:92). Further examples found include:

- (a) He was convinced that we were all perfectly able to write, spell and figure, but that we were making a show of being misinformed... (LOB Ro4 109 10)
- (b) Christ Jesus... who is able to preserve you without sin ... (BUC D16 0750 8)

did x' or 'he had the ability to do x'/'it was possible for him to do x', while COULD can only evoke the notion 'he had the ability to do x'/'it was possible for him to do x'?

The answer to the question of why COULD is restricted to the idea of having an ability/possibility lies in the nature of the modal auxiliaries, which evoke mere states of potentiality. This is amply confirmed for past COULD by Palmer's (1990:93ff) observations on the contexts where COULD can be used (besides negatives and interrogatives) and by his comments on the meaning of COULD in these contexts:

1. "Could may be used [in the affirmative] if there is no implication of actuality, but only a statement of possibility:

(15) I was plenty scared. In the state she was in she could actually kill."  
(Ehrman 1966:50)

2. "If there is an indication not of a single action, but of successive or habitual actions, *could* may be used:

(16) I could get up and go to the kitchen whenever I wanted to.

(...) It may be that could is permissible in such circumstances because there was a general possibility over a period of time, not a possibility that resulted in a single definable action."

3. "[...] it must be admitted that the following are rather unlikely to occur (except in a habitual sense):

(17) ? I ran fast and I could just/almost/nearly catch the bus.

(18) ? I could catch the bus because I ran fast.

The reason seems to be that catching a bus is a momentary activity and there is no continuing possibility of this action. By contrast, one can be in a position to reach a branch or enter a house for some time [cf. *I could just /almost / nearly reach the branch; I could reach the branch because it was loaded down*]. It seems that the occurrence of *could* with *just*, *nearly*, *hardly*, *because...* etc. depends on the nature of the event and the duration of the possibility. It is where *could* is closest to *did* that it becomes most unacceptable."

Even a case which Palmer (1990:96) describes as "more difficult to explain" due to the fact that "there is a clear implication of actuality" can be accounted for in terms of a state of possibility:

- 
- (c) He finally concluded that I was able to take care of myself. (Oxford English Dictionary, sub *able*)
  - (d) [H]e was fully able to take care of her. (F. Scott Fitzgerald 1925:178)
  - (e) I'm well able to handle this alone, Mr. Slocum. (O'Neill 1947:543)

- (19) Jane darling, I'm so glad you could make it.

Here the host is not merely, as Palmer suggests, "saying he is glad that the guest has arrived;" he is rejoicing at the fact that this fortunate event was *possible*. The use of *COULD* also allows the speaker to allude discreetly to his/her guest's efforts at surmounting any obstacles to her coming which could have made the latter impossible.

As regards the capacity of *BE ABLE TO* to evoke both the sense of having an ability and that of exercising it, the explanation lies in the language-specific meanings of the component parts making up this construction. The adjective *able*, although it evokes a quality like all adjectives, denotes a quality which implies activity. Comparison of the noun phrases *an able man* and *a capable man* shows that whereas *capable* can describe a man who has talent but is doing nothing with it, *able* depicts the man as active or at least as ready for immediate action. This nuance shows through in the complement forms used after these two adjectives. *Capable* is construed with the preposition *of* followed by a noun or an *ing* form (*he was capable of murder*); *of* signifies that murder is a point of reference on the basis of which the capacity is defined (an abstract version of the notion of origin). *Able* is followed by the preposition *to* (idea of movement) plus the infinitival form of the verb (which is less nominal than the *ing* form or a noun and denotes the full actualization of an event in abstraction from any specific place in time). The meaning of the *BE ABLE TO* construction thus involves an orientation towards the actualization of the infinitive's event which is not present in the *capable of* construction with *of* followed by a gerund or noun.

Indeed the meaning of the preposition *to* makes a very important contribution to the resultant meaning of the *BE ABLE TO* phrase. When used with the infinitive, this preposition evokes the latter's event as the endpoint of a movement in time of its potential actualizer from a before-position to an after-position (cf. Duffley 1992:16–17). In the construction under study, the potential actualizer is identified by the subject of *BE*, the before-position corresponds to the latter's possession of the ability denoted by *ABLE* and the after-position to the (prospective or subsequent) realization of the infinitive's event. Furthermore, because *to* evokes the idea of a movement, this movement can be construed as either nonrealized (as in *I wanted to leave early*) or realized (as in *I managed to leave early*). The two senses of (13) above can thus be explained on the basis of the meaning of *able*, which involves orientation towards immediate action, and the meaning of *to*, which introduces the idea of a movement conceivable as either realized or nonrealized, notions that are not present in the construction with *COULD*, which as a modal merely denotes a state of possibility with respect to the event expressed by the infinitive following it.

Nor should one neglect to take into account the meaning of the verb *BE* in the *ABLE TO* construction. At first sight, the uses under consideration here might seem to involve the stative copula sense. However, it must not be forgotten that *BE* plus adjective can also be used by a speaker to evoke a dynamic sense, as in one reading of (20):

- (20) He was sick twice.

A dynamic sense is also present in the use of *BE* plus adjective in the progressive construction:

- (21) He was being childish.

It will be proposed here that it is the dynamic sense of BE which occurs in the BE ABLE TO construction when the latter evokes the infinitive event as actually realized. Confirmation of this hypothesis is provided by uses such as (22) below, a use involving the progressive construction much like (21) above:

- (22) We are gradually being able to get our message across.

To complete the discussion of CAN and BE ABLE TO, it is worth noting a parallel phenomenon with MUST and HAVE TO. Palmer points out two relevant facts (1980:98) concerning this pair, but once again his observations require some refinements and, above all, call for explanations. He remarks, first of all, that HAVE GOT TO and HAVE TO can imply actuality in the present whereas MUST does not:

- (23) It's a slow walk down, he's got to fight his way through the crowds.  
 (24) It's a slow walk down, he must fight his way through the crowds.

In (23) "it may well be that the person referred to (a boxer coming to the ring) is actually engaged in fighting his way through the crowd; with the second using *must*, this interpretation would be impossible." The second pertinent fact is that "the past tense forms of HAVE TO and HAVE GOT TO imply actuality," as in (25) below, and are almost never used to evoke mere past necessity:

- (25) We had to make a special trip to Epsom to collect the bloody thing,

This latter observation must be qualified however; it quite commonly the case in contexts such as (26) that HAD TO evokes the necessity in the past of an event whose actualization is not necessarily implied.

- (26) Why did they leave so suddenly?  
 They had to go to the dentist's.

This means that we observe the same two possibilities with HAVE TO as with BE ABLE TO, and so can oppose MUST and HAVE TO in similar terms to those applied to CAN and BE ABLE TO above. Accordingly, (27) can imply either 'he has an obligation to leave at 4:00' or 'he leaves every day at 4:00 because he is obliged to'.

- (27) He has to leave at 4:00.

MUST, on the other hand, as Palmer observes, can only refer to the future, i.e., it evokes merely a state of necessity or obligation in the present and cannot imply the actuality of the infinitive's event as a result of the obligation:

- (28) He must leave my class every day at 4:00.

The explanation for the capacity of HAVE TO to evoke the actualization of the event expressed by the infinitive is similar to that for BE ABLE TO. Like the latter, the HAVE TO phrase contains the preposition *to*, with the consequent possibility of a double construal according to whether the movement signified by the preposition is conceived as realized or nonrealized. Moreover, the first component of the construction, the verb HAVE, is also conceivable in both a stative and a dynamic sense, as shown by the existence of uses such as:

- (29) I am having to take an aspirin every two hours.<sup>4</sup>

It is plausible therefore that this dynamic sense combines with the realized construal of the movement signified by *to* when HAVE TO signifies actuality of the infinitive's event as in (25) above. Before any definitive conclusions can be made, however, a proper investigation of the semantic contribution of the meaning of the verb HAVE is necessary, an undertaking which is beyond the scope of the present study.

The authors hope that this paper has completed Palmer's insights into the nature of the modal auxiliaries and their contrast with the semi-modals in English by going more deeply into the level of language-specific explanation. Palmer's intuitions about the modal auxiliaries being opposed to the notion of actuality have been clarified by showing more clearly their relation to the semantic category of nonassertiveness and the analogy with the modal uses of NEED and DARE. More importantly, however, the meaning-capacity of the BE ABLE TO and HAVE TO constructions has been explained by the semantic contribution of each of their component parts to the resulting meaning of these phrases in discourse, thereby providing a framework of analysis for the numerous other semi-modal constructions in English. The analysis proposed here provides further evidence that these so-called 'semi-modals' (Palmer 1990:25) are not modal auxiliaries, while at the same time allowing us to understand how they are so closely related in meaning to the latter. Because BE ABLE TO contains the notions 'be', 'ability', and 'movement', it can be practically equivalent to the state of possibility evoked by CAN when the movement signified by *to* is conceived as nonrealized and BE has its stative sense. Ironically enough, however, the use which has merited it the appellation 'semi-modal', where it is suppletive for COULD in reference to single actions in the past, is precisely a case where CAN is not appropriate because it is a modal, whereas BE ABLE TO is utilizable because it is not.



## REFERENCES

- BROWN UNIVERSITY CORPUS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH [BUC]. 1964. Providence RI: Department of Linguistics, Brown University.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Haegeman (1980) for further examples.

- DUFFLEY, PATRICK J. 1992. *The English infinitive*. London: Longman.
- . 1994. *Need and dare*: The black sheep of the modal family. *Lingua* 94:213–43.
- EHRMAN, MADELINE. 1966. *The meanings of the modals in present-day American English*. The Hague: Mouton.
- HAEGEMAN, LILIANE. 1980. *Have to* and progressive aspect. *Journal of English linguistics* 14:1–5.
- JACOBSSON, BENGT. 1974. The auxiliary *need*. *English studies* 55:56–63.
- NEHLS, DIETRICH. 1986. *Semantik und syntax des englischen verbs*, vol. 2. Heidelberg: Julius Groos.
- LANCASTER/OSLOBERGEN CORPUS OF BRITISH ENGLISH [LOB]. 1978. Oslo: Department of English, University of Oslo.
- O'NEILL, EUGENE. 1947. *The plays of Eugene O'Neill*. New York: Random House.
- PALMER, F. R. 1977. Modals and actuality. *Journal of linguistics* 13:1–23.
- . 1980. *Can, will*, and actuality. In *Studies in English linguistics for Randolph Quirk*, ed. S. Greenbaum, G.N. Leech & J. Svartvik, 91–99. London: Longman.
- . 1990. *Modality and the English modals*. London: Longman.
- . 2001. *Mood and modality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- SCOTT FITZGERALD, F. 1925. *The great Gatsby*. New York: Scribners.
- WESTNEY, PAUL. 1995. *Modals and periphrastics in English: An investigation into the semantic correspondence between certain English modal verbs and their periphrastic equivalents*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.





# THE LIAR OR THE MAD DOG(S)? ANOTHER LACUS LOOK AT THE LIAR PARADOX

RENNIE GONSALVES  
*Brooklyn College*

RECENTLY PAUL SAKA (2007A) HAS CLAIMED that his Attitudinal Semantics resolves the Liar paradox by suggesting that (a), “this sentence is false,” should really be understood as (b), “X thinks that this sentence is false,” where “X” is the speaker. Saka’s suggestion is that while (b) leads to the conclusion that X has contradictory beliefs, this is fine because the possession of contradictory beliefs is, after all, ubiquitous. This paper will first present an informal truth value analysis of the Liar, and then go on to discuss Saka’s proposal. Then we will look at an alternative approach to the Liar suggested by Jerrold J. Katz (2004). We will argue that Katz’s approach not only takes full account of what actually happens when we try to assign a truth value to the Liar sentence, but also preserves both the consistency and the effabilism, or expressive completeness, of natural language.

Anyone who has gone through the process of learning to write programs in a computer programming language will be familiar with the commonplace error of writing code that sends the computer processor into an infinite loop. This can happen, for example, when a program contains a series of statements that need to be repeated several times until a condition is met, as might happen in what is referred to by programmers as a “do loop.” Here is an example of a very simple “do loop” in C that works fine:

```
Program A;  
x = 0;  
do {  
    x = x + 1;  
} while (x<9);
```

What this means in simple words is as follows: begin by setting the value of x to zero; then increase the value of x by one so long as the condition (x is less than 9) is true; when the condition is false, stop. Of course this little loop will stop when the value of x is equal to 9, because it is at that point that the condition becomes false. But consider the following do loop:

```
Program B;  
x = 1;  
do {  
    x = x + 1;  
} while (x>0);
```

This loop will never terminate because the condition ( $x$  is greater than zero) will always be true.

Now consider the following sentence:

- (1)  $[_S [_{NP} \text{This sentence}]_i [_{VP} \text{is false.}]_i]_i$

Sentence 1 is a version of the so called Liar sentence, with the additional annotation of identical subscripts to plainly indicate the co-reference relation between the subject NP and the S-node of the sentence itself.<sup>1</sup> Looked at in one way this sentence is paradoxical because if it is taken to be false, then it must be true, and if it is taken to be true, then it must be false. It thus seems to violate the law of non-contradiction in logic, which can be written as follows:

- (2)  $\neg (P \wedge \neg P)$ ; (it is not the case that  $P$  and not  $P$ , or  $P$  can never be both true and false at the same time in the same circumstances)

The following parallel sentence, however, results in no such paradox:

- (3)  $[_S [_{NP} \text{This sentence}]_i [_{VP} \text{is false.}]_k]_k$

The reason why sentence 3 is not paradoxical, of course, is that the subscripts are no longer identical: the NP is subscripted with the letter  $i$ , while the S-node of the sentence is subscripted with the letter  $k$ . We can imagine the very natural occurrence of sentence 3 in a text, for example, where the NP subject here refers to the immediately preceding sentence of a paragraph, a sentence appropriately subscripted with the letter  $i$ , with the result that sentence 3 simply makes the claim that that other sentence is false. The following example illustrates this situation.

- (4) a.  $[_S [_{NP} \text{John}]_i [_{VP} \text{is hungry.}]_j]_j$   
 b.  $[_S [_{NP} \text{This sentence}]_j [_{VP} \text{is false.}]_k]_k$

---

<sup>1</sup> The use of indexing to indicate anaphoric reference goes back at least to Chomsky's famous article, "On Binding," (Chomsky 1981). Here is an example from a more current introductory text in syntax that closely parallels the way I have used indexing (Carnie 2007:142):

ii) \*Heidi <sub>$i$</sub>  believes Martha <sub>$j$</sub> 's description of herself <sub>$i$</sub> .

iii) Heidi <sub>$i$</sub>  believes Martha <sub>$j$</sub> 's description of herself <sub>$j$</sub> .

The only possibly unusual feature of my use of indexing is that the expression "this sentence," an NP, is co-indexed with the sentence itself, which is arguably of a different syntactic category. But this is only the result of the meta-linguistic nature of the relevant referential relationship in the Liar sentence.

What this sequence of two sentences says, ultimately, is that John is not hungry, which could turn out to be true or false, but certainly not both. So it would seem that the liar sentence depends crucially on the co-reference relation between the NP subject and the S for its status as a paradox.

Let's imagine that we are interested in writing a very simple program for the computer that will figure out the truth values of sentences like the ones in 1 and 4 above in a particular situation. We will do this informally so that we do not run into trouble with real-world C programmers. Before we start we will outline a few preliminary conventions. We will assume that the semantic value of predicates, like the VPs in our sentences, are sets of individuals, and we will use notation as in the following:

- (5)  $S = \{a, b, c\}$ ; S is the set whose members are a, b, and c.
- (6)  $a \in S$ ; a is a member of the set S.

We will assume that the semantic value of NPs are individuals; here we have only three: John, and the truth values true (indicated with the numeral 1) and false (indicated with the numeral 0). Let's imagine that the VP "is hungry" has the semantic value, in a particular situation  $v$ , of the set whose members are John, Mary and Harry; we will indicate this as follows:

- (7)  $[[ \text{is hungry} ]]^v = \{ \text{John, Mary, Harry} \}$

Here the double square brackets on the left of the equal sign indicate the semantic value of their contents, and the superscript  $v$  denotes the situation  $v$ . We will also assume the following:

- (8)  $[[ \text{John} ]]^v = \text{John}$ ; the NP "John" denotes the individual whose name is John.
- (9)  $[[ \text{This sentence} ]]^v_x$  is the semantic value of the co-indexed constituent, the constituent whose index is the same as  $x$ .
- (10)  $[[ \text{is false} ]]^v = \{ 0 \}$ ; the predicate "is false" denotes the set whose only member is 0.
- (11)  $[[ \text{is true} ]]^v = \{ 1 \}$ ; the predicate "is true" denotes the set whose only member is 1.
- (12)  $[[ [_s \text{ NP VP} ] ]]^v = 1$  iff  $[[ \text{NP} ]]^v \in [[ \text{VP} ]]^v$  and 0 otherwise; a subject-predicate sentence is true if and only if the semantic value of its NP subject is a member of the set denoted by the semantic value of its VP predicate.

Let's imagine that our program for finding the truth values for our sentence in the situation  $v$  is as follows:

```
Evaluate ( $S^v$ );
 $[[S]]^v = \text{unknown}$ ;
do {
  a. find the semantic value of the NP in S;
  b. find the semantic value of the VP in S;
  c. if the semantic value of the NP is a member of the
```

```

    set denoted by the semantic value of the VP, then
    [[S]] = 1, else [[S]] = 0;
  } while ([[S]] = unknown);

```

Now let's see what happens when we try to calculate the semantic values of sentence (4) b and sentence 1. In computing the value of sentence (4)b, our Evaluate program initially sets the semantic value of sentence (4)b to "unknown" and then proceeds to the "do loop"; it encounters statement a, and so tries to find the semantic value of the NP, [This sentence]<sub>i</sub>. According to our rule 9 above, the semantic value of this NP in sentence (4)b is equal to the semantic value of the co-indexed constituent, which happens to be sentence (4)a. So sentence (4)a needs to be evaluated. As in the case of sentence (4)b, initially sentence (4)a is assigned the semantic value "unknown." But very quickly our evaluation routine finds that the semantic of the NP in (4)a is the individual John, that the semantic value of the VP in (4)a is the set {John, Mary, Harry}, and indeed that the semantic value of the NP in (4)a is a member of the set denoted by the semantic value of the VP in (4)a; therefore, following statement c, our evaluation routine sets the semantic value of sentence (4)a to 1, or true. Now, according to our rule 9, this gets to be the semantic value of the NP in (4)b. Proceeding then with our evaluation of (4)b, we find by statement b of Evaluate and rule 10 above that the semantic value of the VP "is false" is equal to the set whose only member is zero, {0}; then by statement c of Evaluate we find that 1 is not a member of the set {0}, so we do the "else" which tells us to set the value of the sentence, here sentence (4)b, to 0 or false. The next step in Evaluate is to check the condition; since [[S]] is 0 or false and so is no longer equal to "unknown," the condition of the "do loop" turns out to be false, and so we stop. Again, in our imaginary situation v, sentence (4)b also turns out to be false, consistent with our intuitions.

When we try to evaluate sentence 1 with our Evaluate routine, here is what happens. As before, we initially assign sentence 1 the value "unknown." We then proceed to the first statement in the "do loop" which tells us to find the value of the NP. Here our rule 9 tells us that the value of our NP here, [This sentence]<sub>i</sub>, is the value of sentence 1 itself, since this is the co-indexed constituent. So our next step is to evaluate sentence 1, again; and this happens again, and again, and again without end because we are in an infinite loop, just as in our little C program, Program B.<sup>2</sup>

Notice that the reason for the infinite loop in Program B is different from the reason for the infinite loop in the Liar sentence, sentence 1. Program B results in an infinite loop because, even though it gets tested again and again, the condition in the do loop is always true; it never becomes false so we never get to stop. But with our evaluation of the liar sentence, we never get to even test the condition; we are stuck at evaluating the co-referential

---

<sup>2</sup> Note that the looping occurs without ever evaluating the predicate "is false." This indicates, as noted by Saul Kripke (1975:693), that even if the predicate were "is true," the sentence would be just as problematic from a referential point of view, even though it would not give the same impression of being paradoxical.

constituents NP and S. This is very much like a dog chasing its own tail, spinning around in a circle. The difference of course is that sooner or later the dog gets tired, but not the Liar.

However, while the reasons for the infinite loops in these two procedures, Program B and the Liar sentence, might be different, the result is the same: processing continues indefinitely without a resolution. We never get a numerical value of *x* in Program B, and we never get a truth value for the Liar sentence. Because of the enormous complexity of many computer programs it would seem that there must be a lot of different ways to wind up with infinite loops in programs; but, by virtue of being infinite, it also seems as though the result of any infinite loop must always be the same: namely, that no value for whatever is sought in the program is ever arrived at.

Of course, we are not the first people to notice this infinite looping of the Liar. Here is my colleague at Brooklyn College, Emily Michael (1975:370),<sup>3</sup> in her paper "Peirce's Paradoxical Solution to the Liar's Paradox," quoting one of the greatest American philosophers, Charles Sanders Peirce, on the topic:

A logically meaningful sentence will satisfy the laws of logic. Peirce argues that this logical law does not apply to SI [the Liar] because this symbol has no object. Logic, Peirce says, is concerned with assertoric propositions[1]... He says of assertoric propositions, "Propositions which assert always assert something of an object, which is the subject of the proposition." [2]... In the case of SI, however, the proposition "does itself state that it has no object. It talks of itself and only of itself and has no external relation whatever." [3]... That is, the subject of the proposition being the proposition itself, the predicate makes no assertion of an object to which the proposition refers. An assertoric proposition, then, makes reference to an external object, but this proposition "talks of itself and only of itself and has no external relation whatever." "Logical laws," however, "only hold good as conditions of a symbol having an object." [4]...

And here is Hans G. Herzberger (1970:150), explaining more exactly what's wrong with sentences like the Liar, and using a very apt expression (in quotes) from John Searle's 1959 dissertation:

All the cases so far have involved a sentence that belongs to its own ancestral domain. On a deeper analysis, however, it is not the cyclical character that renders them pathological; and it is a virtue of the grounding condition that it brings it out. Consider that all the cases so far suffer from "unconsummated reference."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> I have renumbered the author's footnotes for this passage. They are as follows: 1. Ms 743, "Rules of Logic Logically Deduced," June 23, 1860. 2. *Ibid.* 3. Ms 340 [1864]. 4. *Ibid.* The manuscript (Ms) numbers here are to "The Charles S. Peirce Papers," at the Houghton Library of Harvard University, as provided in Robin 1967.

<sup>4</sup> It seems that Searle's use of the word "unconsummated" here is intended to capture a sense similar to the sense of "consummation" in Hamlet's famous "to be, or not to be" soliloquy:

And finally, here is Gilbert Ryle (1951:68), in his paper, “Heterologicality,” letting us know why he thinks the Liar never really makes a statement, and coming to a conclusion that is very similar to our own here:

If unpacked our pretended assertion would run “The current statement {namely that the current statement [namely that the current statement (namely that the current statement . . .} . The brackets are never closed: no verb is ever reached; no statement of which we can even ask whether it is true or false is ever adduced.

However, in his book *How to Think About Meaning*, Paul Saka will have none of this talk about an evaluation of the truth value of the liar sentence leading to an infinite loop without ever terminating in a truth value because of Peirce’s lack of an object or Searle’s “unconsummated reference” or Ryle’s failure to get to the verb. Here is the closest Saka (2007b:221) ever comes to acknowledging the presence of such problems in the liar:

. . . in order to understand “ $\lambda$  is false”, one arguably does need to identify the referent of “ $\lambda$ ”; and in order to grasp the referent of “ $\lambda$ ” one arguably does need to understand the statement “ $\lambda$  is false”. Thus, in some cases self-reference might present a circle that is impossible to break into; such reference is [according to Kripke 1975:706] “ungrounded” . . .

However, Saka very quickly goes on to argue that we should not make such a fuss about “self-reference” since “it is not clear that self-reference is necessary for paradox” (2007b:221). He uses the following example as illustrative of a paradox without self-reference:

- (13) Nixon states the following and nothing but the following: “What Jones says is true.”
- (14) Jones states the following and nothing but the following: “What Nixon says is false.”

Using our co-indexing notation, simplifying the syntax a bit, and abbreviating the example, we might write it as follows:

- (15)  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What Jones says}]_k [_{\text{is true}}]_m]$
- (16)  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What Nixon says}]_m [_{\text{is false}}]_k]$

---

To die: to sleep:  
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
 That flesh is heir to; ‘tis a consummation  
 Devoutly to be wished.

In the Liar, the consummation of the referential value of the expression “this sentence” is “devoutly to be wished.” Alas, that wish remains unfulfilled.

It is clear that an evaluation of this example will lead our little Evaluate routine into just as endless an infinite loop as with the Liar sentence, because in order to come up with a truth value for 15 we have to first come up with a truth value for 16, since the NP in 15,  $[_{NP} \text{What Jones says}]_k$ , is co-indexed with the S-node in 16; but in order to come up with a truth value for 16 we have to first come up with a truth value for 15, since the NP in 16,  $[_{NP} \text{What Nixon says}]_m$ , is co-indexed with the S-node in 15. Again, to find the truth value for sentence 15 we need to find the truth value for sentence 16, and to find the truth value for sentence 16 we need to find the truth value for sentence 15. So we have another case of tail-chasing; or rather, this time we have two dogs with each one simultaneously chasing the other's tail—a slightly larger circle, but a circle nonetheless, and more importantly a failure to refer and to ever get to the verb, as Ryle points out concerning the more traditional Liar.

But that is not all; we can put as many dogs into the ring as we please. Notice that there is no reason for us to stop at just two sentences in a so called “loop liar”; we could have as many sentences as we wish. Consider the following  $n+1$  sentences, where  $n$  is any positive integer:

- (17) 1.  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What Jones says}]_{l+1} [\text{is true}]]_m$   
 2.  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What Smith says}]_{l+2} [\text{is true}]]_{l+1}$   
 3.  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What Richardson says}]_{l+3} [\text{is true}]]_{l+2}$   
 4.  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What Roberts says}]_{l+4} [\text{is true}]]_{l+3}$   
 ...  
 $n+1$ .  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What Edwards says}]_m [\text{is false}]]_{l+n}$

This loop is just as “paradoxical” as the pair in (15) and (16). It is clear from this that the liar sentence is just the limiting case of the loop liar consisting of  $n+1$  sentences, where  $n$  happens to be equal to zero, as in sentence (18).

- (18)  $[_S [_{NP} \text{What I am saying now}]_i [\text{is false}]]_i$

So there is nothing very special about the loop liar sentences at all; reference is just as ungrounded as in the case of the single liar sentence. In fact, what the loop liar does for us is that by widening the loop a bit it helps to underline and make clear the endlessly looping reference situation that is characteristic of the liar, a situation that results in the “unconsummated reference” noticed by John Searle and others.

The failure of reference in the case of the Liar, a grammatical sentence which quite literally makes sense, underlines the need for a clear distinction between sense and reference. Jerrold J. Katz's autonomous sense theory makes just such a distinction, and in his last book, *Sense, Reference, and Philosophy*, Katz clearly lays out the solution his theory provides for the problems related to the Liar sentence and other similar cases. Katz refers to the situation created in philosophy and especially logic by the Liar sentence as the Epimenidean dilemma, after the sixth-century Greek philosopher Epimenides, whose line in a poem, “the Cretans, always liars,” apparently came to be associated with the Liar paradox, perhaps by Bertrand Russell, because Epimenides was himself a Cretan. One of the prob-

lems posed by the Liar paradox is the problem of the consistency of language, since as we have seen, the Liar might be taken to lead to a violation of the law of non-contradiction. Katz puts the problem this way: “how can we consistently reason to the conclusion that the language on which our reasoning depends is inconsistent” (Katz 2004:95). The other side of the coin of consistency is the concept of effabilism, or expressive completeness, on which Katz quotes Alfred Tarski as saying the following: “it could be claimed that ‘if we can speak meaningfully about anything at all, we can also speak about it in colloquial language’” (*ibid.*, Tarski 1956:164). Tarski thus seems to come down on the side of effabilism, and to sacrifice the notion that natural languages are consistent. Katz suggests that both Tarski and Gottlob Frege favored the establishment of a “logically perfect” artificial language in order to overcome the various inadequacies of natural languages (Frege 1952:70), such as that highlighted by the Liar sentence. Katz sees his autonomous sense theory as providing a way through these “two horns” of the dilemma. Unlike Frege’s theory of sense (Frege 1952:56–78), by which sense determines reference, in Katz’s theory sense mediates but does not determine reference. This allows Katz to distinguish the reference or extension of an expression from its sense or intension. Thus a sentence has both an extensional proposition and an intensional proposition, and either or both of these can be defective. In the case of the Liar sentence the intensional proposition is fine: the sentence makes perfect sense. However, the extensional proposition is defective. Here there is a case of “unconsummated reference,” the verb never being reached, or as I prefer it, the mad dog constantly chasing his own tail. Katz’s solution thus seems consistent with the diagnosis of Hans G. Herzberger (1960) that the subject NP in the liar sentence is “ungrounded.” Herzberger is clear on the notion that the exact logical criterion for groundedness is in need of more precise specification, but for me the metaphor is sufficient to explain what’s going on with the Liar. Moreover, Katz’s solution seems to save both effabilism, the expressive power of language, and consistency, its logical soundness, and without indicting anyone.

Which takes us back to Paul Saka’s solution to the dilemma of the Liar. He seems to take the metaphor of the Liar literally and then indicts the speaker of the sentence as capable of having inconsistent beliefs. Here is how he lays out his theory (2007b:236) with respect to the Liar:

As I see it, truth-conditional T-schemas fail because they assume a sort of objectivism; they assume that the analysis of truth need not make essential and explicit reference to some subject who thinks about truth. They need to be rejected in favor of the following attitudinal T-schema:

(T<sub>ψ</sub>) S thinks “Φ is true” ≡ S thinks that P.

Instantiation by the original Liar yields:

(OK) S thinks “λ is true” ≡ S thinks λ is false.

If S thinks λ is true then S thinks λ is false; and if S thinks λ is false then S thinks



$\lambda$  is true. Either way, S is highly irrational. But this is not at all paradoxical because there is a difference between an inconsistent state of affairs and an inconsistent system of beliefs. The former, by its very nature, cannot obtain, yet the latter is not only possible but common, even ubiquitous.

Here  $\lambda$  is the Liar sentence. Notice that on our diagnosis here to believe or not to believe the Liar sentence is not to believe or to disbelieve anything of consequence since the Liar makes no claim about any object on Peirce's account, or never reaches the verb on Ryles's account. Actually, on a personal note, having grown up in the West Indies the image that I get from the prospect of believing or not believing the Liar sentence is the image of someone looking at the cloud of dust created on a hot tropical day in a dry dirt West Indian backyard by a mad dog desperately chasing his own tail. That person looking at the mad dog must wonder what's wrong with him. This is just like the computer programmer who tries to debug his flawed code that sent the computer processor into an infinite loop. He too is looking for some error. Maybe he made an error in his program, but he is not satisfied until he finds the mistake, corrects it, and gets the entire program working properly.



## REFERENCES

- CARNIE, ANDREW. 2007. *Syntax: A generative introduction*. Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- CHOMSKY, NOAM. 1981. On binding. *Linguistic inquiry* 11:1–46.
- FREGE, GOTTLLOB. 1952. *Translations from the philosophical writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. Peter Geach & Max Black. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- HERZBERGER, HANS G. 1960. Paradoxes of grounding in semantics. *The journal of philosophy* 47(6):145–67.
- KATZ, JERROLD J. 2004. *Sense reference and philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- KRIPKE, SAUL. 1975. Outline of a theory of truth. *The journal of philosophy* 72(19):690–716.
- MICHAEL, EMILY. 1975. Peirce's paradoxical solution to Liar Paradox. *Notre Dame journal of formal logic* 16(3):369–74.
- PEIRCE, CHARLES SANDERS. 1967. "The Charles S. Peirce Papers" at the Houghton Library of Harvard University, catalogued by R. Robin in his *Annotated catalogue of the papers of Charles S. Peirce*. Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- RYLE, GILBERT. 1951. Heterologicality. *Analysis* 11(3):61–68.
- SEARLE, JOHN. 1959. Problems arising in the theory of meaning out of the notions of sense and reference. Diss., Oxford University.

- SAKA, PAUL. 2007a. Truth and beyond: Thinking about the Liar Paradox. Paper presented at LACUS Forum 34. (2007 Meeting Handbook, p. 46; published as Beyond truth. *LACUS forum* 34:211–20.)
- . 2007b. *How to think about meaning*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- TARSKI, ALFRED. 1956. The concept of truth in formalized languages. In *Logic, semantics, metamathematics*, 152–278. Oxford: Clarendon Press.



## PRE-INDO-EUROPEAN VERB-SUBJECT ORDER

TOBY D. GRIFFEN

*Southern Illinois University Edwardsville*

IN HIS GROUND-BREAKING WORK on the subject, Winfred Lehmann (2002) uses the term Pre-Indo-European to denote a stage (around 8000–5000 BCE) preceding Proto-Indo-European, rather than a substratum or a survival. As such, it should represent the stage of the language family prior to the development of such characteristics as inflectional endings.

This study will suggest the motivation for the development of personal endings on the verb—verb conjugations—from citing a pattern attested in Celtic languages for prepositions. In the process, it will shed light upon one aspect of Pre-Indo-European word order.

1. VERB CONJUGATION IN INDO-EUROPEAN. One of the salient features of the Indo-European languages is the complex system of personal endings on the verb form. In any grammar of ancient Greek, for example, we find complex tables of the conjugation system (see, for example, Paine 1961:38–39 for just the basic verb λύω ‘I loose’). And of course, students of modern as well as Classical Indo-European languages seek out books with such titles as *101 German Verbs: The Art of Conjugation* (Ryder 2008).

Since we do not need to go into such detail in this study, let us restrict ourselves simply to the well-known Latin verb *amāre* ‘to love’ in the present active indicative, as in **Table 1** (overleaf).

Typical of the ancient languages, in Classical Latin the verb inflection was usually sufficient to denote the personal pronoun function. Thus, for example, a sentence such as *Mariam amō* ‘I love Mary’ would only very rarely include the first person singular personal pronoun *ego* ‘I’, and then only for some peculiar emphatic meaning.

In the later development of the Romance languages, however, we find an historical trend common throughout the Indo-European language family, in which the subject personal pronoun progresses from rare emphatic to optional and eventually to obligatory. Thus, in Modern French, one could not simply state *\*Aime Marie* to express the equivalent to the Latin without the personal pronoun, but rather one would be forced to say *J’aime Marie* with the pronoun.

As we consider the verb conjugations found throughout Indo-European languages, from the very earliest attestations to the modern period, we are left with an inescapable conclusion: The personal endings of the Indo-European verb must have developed prior to the period of time covered by the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European. Thus, they must have developed in the Pre-Indo-European period.

The question we need to address, then, is how they may have developed. Lehmann provides three methods for gaining insights into Pre-Indo-European: (1) internal reconstruction; (2) examination of residue; and (3) the examination of “reconstructed languages against

	Singular	Plural
1st person	<i>amō</i>	<i>amāmus</i>
2nd person	<i>amās</i>	<i>amātis</i>
3rd person	<i>amāt</i>	<i>amant</i>

**Table 1.** Present active indicative of Latin *amāre* ‘to love.’

		Middle Welsh		Old Irish	
		Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1st person		<i>arnaf</i>	<i>arnam, arnan</i>	<i>im</i>	<i>imunn</i>
2nd person		<i>arnat</i>	<i>arnawch</i>	<i>immut</i>	<i>immib</i>
3rd person	(masc.)	<i>arnaw</i>	<i>arnunt, arnun</i>	<i>imbi, immi</i>	<i>impu, impo</i>
	(fem.)	<i>arnei, erni</i>		<i>imbe</i>	

**Table 2.** Conjugated prepositions—Middle Welsh *ar* ‘on’ and Old Irish *im* ‘about’ (accusative).

the patterns that have been identified in the general study of languages, so-called typology” (Lehmann 2002:vi). The investigation below draws mainly upon the third method.

2. PREPOSITION CONJUGATION IN CELTIC. In the structure of the Celtic languages, we find a rather curious phenomenon. Certain common prepositions are conjugated as though they were verb forms. Since this is an historical investigation, let us choose examples from Middle Welsh and Old Irish, as these are roughly contemporary and provide us with the oldest reliable forms we have, dating from the early second millennium CE.

In **Table 2**, we find the conjugations of the preposition *ar* ‘on’ in Middle Welsh (after Evans 1976:58) and the preposition *im* ‘about’ in Old Irish (after Thurneysen 1946:273—for the accusative).

When we compare the Latin forms in **Table 1** with the Celtic in **Table 2**, the structural similarity is striking. In both, the form is conjugated by person and number with simple endings attached to the form. Indeed, if we were not aware that the Middle Welsh and the Old Irish conjugated forms were prepositions, we would most likely assume them to be verbs.

In order to understand this preposition conjugation, we need to examine its historical development in Celtic. On this development, the great Welsh linguist Sir John Morris Jones notes the following:

Personal pronouns forming objects of prepositions in Brit[tonic] and Goidelic came to be agglutinated to the prepositions, and ultimately developed into mere inflexions. The “conjugation” so formed was very similar in [Welsh] to that of the verb, and was influenced in its later development by verbal forms. (Morris Jones 1913:397)

Moreover, in his treatment of Old Irish, Rudolf Thurneysen likewise describes the personal endings on prepositions as forms “with suffixed personal pronoun” (1946:509, among many).

		Middle Welsh	
		Singular	Plural
1st person		<i>arna i</i>	<i>arnon ni</i>
2nd person		<i>arnat ti</i>	<i>arnoch chi</i>
3rd person	(masc.)	<i>arno fe</i>	<i>arnyn nhw</i>
	(fem.)	<i>arni hi</i>	

**Table 3.** Conjugation of the Modern Welsh preposition *ar* ‘on’.

In the historical development of the preposition conjugation, then, the suffixed or enclitic pronoun would originally have been recognized as the pronoun itself. However, as it historically became increasingly identified as an ending on the preposition, the personal pronoun was added and is now nearly obligatory in Welsh and is always included in tables of conjugations such as that found in **Table 3**, once again for the preposition *ar* ‘on’ (after King 1996:57).

It appears likely that the pattern of the Celtic conjugated preposition parallels that of the Indo-European conjugated verb. The only difference—and one that will be treated below—is that the preposition ending represents the object of the preposition, while the verb ending represents the subject of the verb.

3. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRE-INDO-EUROPEAN WORD ORDER. As Lehmann (2002:103–105) points out, traditional scholarship (particularly that of Delbrück 1878) maintains that Proto-Indo-European had a basic word order in which the verb came last in the sentence structure SOV. He goes on to give arguments and observations in support of the traditional position (and compare Lehmann 1995:22–26). In summary, however, he makes a rather interesting observation: “It is therefore clear that, in syntax, both Proto-Indo-European and Pre-Indo-European were OV” (Lehmann 2002:105). Thus, the object preceded the verb. But what of the subject?

The evidence from Celtic preposition conjugation demonstrates what happens when a personal pronoun follows a word in such a way that it becomes bound with it as a set phrase and then as a set phonological word. The pronoun becomes an enclitic and then a suffix, recognized finally as an inflectional ending within a conjugation. Ultimately, its identity as an obligatory ending becomes so strong that speakers reintroduce the personal pronoun along with the conjugated form, for they no longer recognize it as pronominal in itself.

Of course, it is rather clear that the development of the conjugated preposition in Celtic could only have occurred with the object pronoun following the preposition itself. Only that order could have created the bond leading from pronoun, to enclitic, to suffix, and finally to an integral part of the word not identifiable as pronominal.

For the conjugated verb to have developed in Indo-European, the Pre-Indo-European verb developments would most likely have paralleled those of the Celtic preposition. Of course, rather than the object, the verb conjugation would have had to incorporate a following pronoun subject. By the time of Latin, the pronoun subject was at the stage that it

was still somewhat recognized as pronominal; but eventually it lost its pronominal identity and the pronoun had to be reintroduced—just as with the Welsh preposition.

**It is therefore necessary to place the pronominal subject after the verb in the basic Pre-Indo-European sentence order.**

4. CONCLUSION. Does this mean that the basic word order in Pre-Indo-European was OVS? Not necessarily. That a pronoun subject or object can change the word order of a sentence is not without precedent. For example, the Welsh direct object follows the verb-noun in the periphrastic word order as in *Mae Siôn yn caru Mair* 'John loves Mary', but it precedes the verb-noun as a possessive pronoun (optionally followed by the personal pronoun, also a mark of possession) in *Mae Siôn yn ei charu (hi)* 'John loves her'. Likewise in French, the noun object follows the verb in *Jean aime Marie* 'John loves Mary' but the pronoun object precedes the verb in *Jean l'aime* 'John loves her'.

Thus, while Pre-Indo-European could certainly have maintained the word order SOV with a subject noun, it appears to be evident from the suffixation of the pronoun as a verb ending that with a subject pronoun it was more likely OVS. This order difference would certainly have made sense if the emphatic or new information came first and known information (the defining mark of the pronoun) came last in Pre-Indo-European.



## REFERENCES

- DELBRÜCK, BERTHOLD. 1878. *Die altindische Wortfolge aus dem Çatapathabrâhmana dargestellt*. Syntaktische Forstellungen 3. Halle: Waisenhaus.
- EVANS, D. SIMON. 1976. *A grammar of Middle Welsh*. Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies.
- KING, GARETH. 1993. *Modern Welsh: A comprehensive grammar*. London: Routledge.
- LEHMANN, WINFRED P. 1995. *Residues of Pre-Indo-European active structure and their implications for the relationships among the dialects*. Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck.
- . 2002. *Pre-Indo-European*. *Journal of Indo-European studies* monograph 41. Washington: Institute for the Study of Man.
- MORRIS JONES, JOHN. 1913. *A Welsh grammar: Historical and comparative, phonology and accidence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- PAINE, STEPHEN W. 1961. *Beginning Greek*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- RYDER, RORY. 2008. 101 *German verbs: The art of conjugation*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- THURNEYSSEN, RUDOLF. 1946. *A grammar of Old Irish*. Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies.



## THE LEXICAL CONTRIBUTION OF *FOR* IN THE *FOR* + SUBJECT + *TO* INFINITIVE

CARLEEN GRUNTMAN  
*Université Laval*

THE *FOR* + SUBJECT + INFINITIVE COMBINATION, or *for... to* construction, has been the focus of much attention among linguists, resulting in a plethora of articles and books, with those by Erdmann (1997), Rudanko (1988), Fisher (1988), Bresnan (1979), Rosenbaum (1967) Jespersen (1965), and more recently Hamawand (2003), being the most notable. Yet, despite all this attention it is not at all clear whether this use of *for* is that of a preposition or an introductory element (complementizer) of a complement. (Other terms used to describe *for* in this construction include: conjunction-like particle, unorganic preposition, inorganic preposition, clause-particle, introductory element, clause-initiating element, subordinator, connector, empty clause linker, signal, etc.) Some grammarians argue that the *for* in *We hope for him to win* is the preposition such as found in *We hope for rain* while others claim it is a complementizer (Hantson 1980a). Rudanko (1988:434) argues that there are two types of *for*, namely a “prepositional *for* and the complementizing *for*” which “marks the NP that follows as the subject of a complement clause.” Jespersen (1965:5) refers to these groups of words as a “nexus” defined as “a combination implying predication and as a rule containing a subject and either a verb or a predicative or both” with *for* “being reduced to an empty particle, a grammatical sign of the subject.” Is *for*, in this construction, a grammatical sign functioning as a meaningless complementizer or the preposition *for* with the infinitive clause as its object? I wish to argue that *for* in the *for... to* construction is not a semantically empty complementizer whose role is to introduce the subject of the infinitive but instead a word with a lexical specification. In addition, while previous studies have proposed a lexical content for *for*, I will argue that a more complete picture of *for*’s signification in the *for... to* construction emerges when all the players in this construction are analyzed, especially the lexical contribution of the *to infinitive*.

The use of *for* in the *for* + subject + *to* + infinitive construction is not a new syntactic role, developing, according to Fisher (1988) and Erdmann (1997) from the preposition *for* because, with the loss of the morphological case system in Middle English, the preposition *for* starts to take over the old benefactive function expressed by the dative in Old English. However, what is new is the term “complementizer” for this function of *for*—a function which is now viewed by many as separate from that of a preposition, so that it is no longer considered a preposition despite its origins as a member of this grammatical category. Before a valid argument can be adduced to support the position of this paper, we must first address the question of what is meant by the term “complementizer.” The term “complementizer” was first used by Rosenbaum (1967:24) to represent certain “markers” as:

one of the properties of predicate complements that distinguishes them from other types of complements... taking the form of single and paired morphemes. Such markers, including the morphemes *that*, *for*, *to*, *poss*, *ing* and others, will be referred to as complementizing morphemes or simply complementizers.

Furthermore, Rosenbaum advanced the notion that *for* “co-occurs only with the complementizer *to*” and that “it may thus prove convenient to speak of the... *for-to* complementizer,” a term now used by Hamawand (2003) among others. Crystal (1985:60) provides another description of what a complementizer is within the theory of Generative Grammar, defining it as a term “used to refer to CONJUNCTIONS which mark an EMBEDDED sentence of a complement type, e.g., *that* in *I said that he’s coming*.” In this case, the matrix verb is transitive, a category, according to Crystal (1985:316) which refers to “the VERB’s relationship to DEPENDENT elements of structure.” In other words, *said* requires a direct object, and the complement clause signalled by *that* is functioning as a direct object. In fact, strictly speaking, the complement clause introduced by the complementizer is a direct object and not a complement for many analysts, with a direct object being a specific type of complement. Indeed, the distinction between complement in the traditional sense and direct object has become blurred with the use of the term, complement no longer strictly applying to the subject or object of a sentence. Quirk *et al.* (1985:55), aware of this confusion regarding “complement,” point out “some writers make use of a very broad sense of ‘complement,’ subsuming complements, objects, and obligatory adverbials in the present grammar.” DeSmet would even argue that:

English does seem to have gotten particularly “cluttered up” with an extensive variety of complement types. For instance, *that*-clauses, *to*-infinitive clauses and gerund clauses each combine with distinct (though often overlapping) sets of verbs; and so do more peripheral complement types, such as bare infinitives, present and past participles, *lest*-clauses, and *for*... *to*-infinitives. (2007:1)

As well, Crystal (1985:60) states “the domain of complementation remains an unclear area in linguistic analysis, and there are several unresolved issues.” One of the “unresolved” issues that DeSmet (2007:3) draws attention to is “diachronic instability” such that “the distributions of complement types are ... prone to change over time” and the subsequent difficulty of reconciling this change with motivation of the complement-type as advanced in synchronic studies. Indeed, he further adds that now “the consensus seems to be that even synchronically it is not possible to formulate principles that could fully predict the distribution of different complement clauses over the inventory of complement-taking verbs.” How then can a complementizer be defined if, indeed, there seems to be some confusion as to what exactly a complement is?

In any case, whether *for* functions as a preposition, or complementizer, or a mere grammatical sign, the question remains as to what meaning is contributed by *for*? Bresnan (1979:13) is one author who admits “there is evidence from syntax, semantics, and universal grammar that complementizers are far from the semantically empty, syntactically trivial



particles they have been assumed to be in most previous generative work." She claims that "the key to the meaning of the *for* complementizer lies in the meaning of the preposition *for*" (80). She uses the following examples to illustrate the use of *for* as expressing subjective reason or cause (i.e., the reason for attribution or judgement): *He considers her a fool for her generosity* and *He considers it foolish for her to help him*; whereas the following examples express purpose, use, or goal: *This book is for your amusement* and *This book is for you to amuse yourself with while I'm away*. She further argues that "the concepts of reason and purpose are semantically related, both implying motivation, and both implying directionality, whether from a source or toward a goal" (81). This might help to explain why future-oriented and affective verbs such as *arrange*, *desire*, *expect*, *hate*, *hope*, *intend*, *like*, *love*, *plan*, and *prefer* readily occur with *for*.

Jespersen observed, "in nearly all sentences the combination of *for* and an infinitive denotes some vague possibility or something imagined" (1965:304). He suggests in the example, *He was ashamed for the Japanese to see it*, the possibility is the Japanese might see it, whereas *...ashamed of the Japanese seeing it* would imply that they did see it. Erdmann (1997:135) refers to this idea of "vague possibility" or "something imagined" when he states that "the predicators permitted by the *for... to* construction are used prospectively." What he means by this is that the predication expressed by the *for... to* construction is something which has not yet taken place, thus the idea of "possibility." He does admit, though, that a small group of predicators describe an event which has already taken place, especially those that express an emotional reaction or an evaluation by the speaker/writer.

However, the most interesting contribution towards a semantic interpretation of the lexical contribution of *for* comes from Lindstromberg (1998:221) who describes a "prototypical" or "core" meaning of *for* as "that of 'ear-marking' the Subject—i.e., assigning the Subject to a Landmark for use, consumption or possession." By this he means that the object or "landmark" of *for* is the eventual user/consumer/possessor of the subject which has been "ear-marked." He uses the example *This piece of cake is for Jane*, in which the subject, *a piece of cake*, has been "ear-marked" for the object (landmark), *Jane*. In other words, because of the lexical contribution of *for*, the subject is intended for the object. Lindstromberg then applies this core meaning of "ear-marking" to the *for... to* pattern, disputing the interpretation that *for* is simply a complementizer binding the complement to its head. Indeed, he argues that a deeper level of analysis can be obtained by considering *for* in its ear-marking sense. Through the example *What I want is for him to meet the deadline*, Lindstromberg (226) claims "what is allocated here is the act of meeting a deadline" or in other words, *meeting the deadline*, the subject, has been "ear-marked" or is "intended for" the object of *for*, namely *him*. Lindstromberg even provides a valid explanation as to why the subject (*meet the deadline*) comes after *him*:

It is a fundamental tendency in English for the grammatical subject of a clause to come before the verb and the complement... *him* comes first since it is the grammatical subject of *meet* which comes second. *Meet* is followed by its complement, the *deadline* (227).

Moreover, as Lindstromberg points out, “if the Subject came *before* the Landmark, the sentence would have a very different meaning: What I want is *to* meet the deadline *for* him” (227).

In addition to these points, another consideration is the semantic contribution of the infinitive *to*, or preposition *to*, which both Lindstromberg and Duffley (1992) argue establishes a time order sequence of before and after, or first event as expressed by the matrix verb coming before the second event as expressed by the infinitive. In fact, Duffley (2004:370) describes the *to*-infinitive “as a prepositional phrase acting as a goal-specifier with respect to the main verb.” Therefore, with respect to *What I want is for him to meet the deadline*, the event expressed by *want* (a desire for him) comes first, or before the goal which is the infinitive’s event of *meet the deadline*. This lexical contribution of *to* is consistent with the subject of the preposition *for* (*meet the deadline*) coming after the landmark (*him*), suggesting a certain harmony between the two prepositions. Indeed, according to Lindstromberg,

*For* does not indicate that the Landmark is a destination in the way that *to* does... [*F*]*or* (unlike *to*) places emphasis on the direction of a trip rather than on its endpoint, with “direction” being the non-metaphorical counterpart of “ear-marking”/“allocation.” (1998:222)

In addition, Lindstromberg advances the notion that “ear-marking” happens first, arguably even before the goal of the desire or want, as in the sentence above. Moreover, he suggests that it is the beginning of an event rather than the endpoint that is foremost in the speaker’s mind. To illustrate consider his example, *These packets are bound for the West*, such that the packets have been ear-marked before the trip has begun, or with his other example, *They left for home an hour ago*, where *leave* indicates it is the beginning rather than the endpoint of a trip that is foremost in the speaker’s mind. All this leads to an impression of a link between the two prepositions in the *for... to* construction, or some type of semantic harmony, with *for* contributing to the beginning of a movement through “ear-marking” and *to* “designating” the goal of the movement. Furthermore, this description of word meaning in the case of *for* and *to* justifies their presence in a sentence and avoids descriptions of words that are semantically empty, that are simply markers that may or may not occur, and moreover also avoids formulating ad hoc rules as data consistently fails to support sentence structure rules.

Hamawand is another author who considers the *for-to* complementizer with respect to meaning, saying that this unit “is a combination of the lexical meanings of *for* and *to* as prepositions” (2003:175–76). Her description of *for-to*’s meaning, influenced by Lindstromberg, is very similar to his, as in *I want for Chris to get married*, where *for* indicates that the goal of getting married has been earmarked for, or allocated to, *Chris*, whereas *to* codes the notion of path that *Chris* takes to the goal. She further adds, within the theory of Cognitive Grammar and the principle of “conceptual distance,” “that the *for-to* complementiser encodes a greater degree of conceptual distance between the referents of the main and complement clauses than the *to*-infinitive...” By applying this principle to *The coach asked Martin to captain the team* vs. *The coach asked for Martin to captain the team*, she interprets the main clause referent in the former as being more involved, even more enthusiastic, in

realising its content, unlike in the latter example in which the main clause referent is less involved, less enthusiastic, in the realisation of the complement event. However, it could be argued that her pragmatic interpretation would not be supported should the context be a nomination meeting where the coach could be quite enthusiastic and even arguing strongly for Martin in front of a hiring committee. Hamawand further supports her position by stating:

evidence in favour of the *for-to* construction, which stresses an indirect relationship, comes from the use of expressions that do not necessitate the presence of the main and complement referents at the same location, as in *The coach asked for Martin to captain the team, but Martin wasn't there.* (2003:177)

However, Martin could be there, and he is being nominated from among others. In addition, how then can the following examples from a SARA search, in which the main and complement referents are at the same location, be explained:

- **G13 783:** He tilted it for me to see.
- **ADY 2454:** I had a vision of someone standing not far behind me with a gun, waiting for me to move.
- **AN8 1425:** Graham sitting there waiting for me to kick him in the teeth.
- **CDM 1232:** She indicated the pretty flower-patterned basin for me to wash my hands in, then I joined them at the table.
- **CDS 828:** Peter Pagnamenta, the editor, came into my room to say there was a message for me to ring the Hawick police: there had been an accident involving my family but he did not know the details.
- **HGS 707:** She looked haughtily at me, waiting for me to leave.
- **HUO 2187:** Benjamin went down on one knee, tugging at my sleeve for me to follow suit.

How should *for* be analyzed in this sort of construction? To which word class does it belong? Are complementizer *for* and preposition *for* two separate words, homonyms? Is it a conjunction-like particle in deep structure but in surface structure a preposition? Within the generative framework the complementizer *for* was postulated because of a similar syntactic function to the complementizer *that*. Hamawand even argues that both interpretations, complementizer *for* and preposition *for* can “co-exist in the same context,” as in *It is good for him not to deal with a crook*, with *for*-NP functioning as a prepositional object and *for*-NP functioning as subject of the complement clause (2003:184). She claims a general interpretation for the prepositional reading, in which the adjective means good for the person’s well-being and a specific interpretation in the complementizer reading because it assumes a moral tinge. However, the complementizer reading is no more a general statement than is the prepositional reading, because both apply to the specific object of the preposition.

One final question to be raised regards reference to the subject of an infinitive. Why is the pronoun in object case? Hantson points out that:

*for* seems to behave syntactically as a preposition in so far as it requires the subject of the infinitive clause to be in the object case. Thus in... *It was too cold for us to have a swim*, we have... *for* us *to have a swim*, not \**for* we *to have a swim*. (1980b:2)

Should the case not be nominative, and given that the case is accusative, does this not then lend support to *for* being a preposition rather than a complementizer? Furthermore, it could be argued that the infinitive cannot have a subject because it is not limited or finited to one thing. Duffley (1999:149) describes the term “subject” as a word which stands in a relation to a finite verb such that:

- (a) the word in question denotes the “VERBING ENTITY” in the event expressed by the verb (thus *John* denotes the “eating entity” in the sentence *John ate the custard*);
- (b) the word in question has, or is replaceable by, one of the following forms: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*;
- (c) if the verb is in the indicative mood, it shows third-person vs. non-third-person agreement (-s vs.  $\emptyset$ ); if the verb is *be*, it shows first (*am*), third (*is*) or plural (*are*) agreement.

He further adds that, “What justifies taking these as defining a linguistic category in English is that they involve a stable correlation between meaning and linguistic sign: if one has (b) and (c) on the level of the sign, one always observes (a) on the level of the meaning.”

Despite the examination by the aforementioned authors and others of the *for... to* pattern, the question remains as to why *for*, which at the level of visible sign is identical, would have one status and then another status in seemingly similar sentences. The consensus seems to be that the *for* of the *for... to* construction is an introductory element (complementizer) of a complement and not a preposition. This classification seems to be based on *for* introducing an infinitive clause and thus belonging to the whole clause. Yet, not all infinitive clauses are introduced by *for* as in the example *He wants Mary to eat supper*. Whether or not *for* appears in the infinitive clause is due to a combination of factors of which the meaning of the main verb needs to be considered along with the meaning of *for*. The attempts to consider *for* on its own, as a word contributing meaning, have been limited to a few authors who alluded to the idea of purpose or prospective; however, little consideration has been given to the other players in this construction such as the *to*-infinitive. The semantics of the *for... to* construction needs to be considered by assessing what each word contributes rather than considering this combination of words as a unit, albeit a tightly-knit unit. In the case of the *for*-to construction, *for* contributes to the beginning of a movement through “ear-marking” and *to* “designates” the goal of the movement. It is hoped that this approach leads to a better understanding of *for* as an independent word, thus avoiding the confusion between whether *for* functioning like a conjunction-like particle belongs to the whole clause, or functioning as a preposition belongs to just the subject of the infinitive.



## REFERENCES

- BRESNAN, JOAN. 1979. *Theory of complementation in English syntax*. New York: Garland.
- CRYSTAL, DAVID. 1985. *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*, 2nd ed. London: Blackwell.
- DESMET, HENDRIK. 2007. *FOR...TO*-infinitives as verbal complements in late modern and present-day English: Between motivation and change. *English studies* 88:67–94.
- DUFFLEY, PATRICK. 1992. *The English infinitive*. London: Longman.
- . 1999. The function of ‘subject’ in locative inversion constructions in English. *LACUS forum* 25:149–55.
- . 2004. Verbs of liking with the infinitive and the gerund. *English studies* 85(4):358–80.
- ERDMANN, PETER. 1997. *The for... to construction in English*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- FISHER, O. 1988. The rise of the *for NP to V* construction: An explanation. In *An historic tongue: Studies in English linguistics in memory of Barbara Strang*, ed. Graham Nixon & John Honey, 67–88. London: Routledge.
- HAMAWAND, ZEKI. 2003. *For-to* complement clauses in English: A cognitive grammar analysis. *Studia linguistica* 57:171–92.
- HANTSON, ANDRÉ. 1980a. Which ‘for’ can survive after ‘hope’? *Journal of linguistic research* 1(2):53–68.
- . 1980b. *For, with and without as non-finite clause introducers*. Trier: Linguistic Agency University of Trier.
- JESPERSEN, OTTO. 1965. *A modern English grammar on historical principles*, 7 vols. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- LINDSTROMBERG, SETH. 1998. *English prepositions explained*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- QUIRK, RANDOLPH, SIDNEY GREENBAUM, GEOFFREY LEECH & JAN SVARTVIK. 1985. *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.
- ROSENBAUM, PETER. 1967. *The grammar of English predicate complement constructions*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- RUDANKO, JUHANI. 1988. On the grammar of *for* clauses in English. *English studies* 5:433–52.
- SARA. n.d. Simple Search of BNC-World. <http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html>.





## THE MEDIEVAL ORIGINS OF TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR: THE OCCITAN GRAMMATICAL TRADITION

ROY HAGMAN  
*Trent University*

IF THERE IS ONE CONCEPT that runs through all the discourse of twentieth-century linguistics, it is the concept of traditional grammar. In the earlier part of the century, it was traditional grammar that the American structuralists found inadequate for the description of Native American languages, forcing them to abandon it and develop an objective empirical approach. Later in the century, it was the accepted syntactic explanations of traditional grammar that were the main obstacle to the acceptance of Chomsky's structural syntax. And it is traditional grammar that still dominates the methods for language teaching in nearly all approaches today that have not rejected grammatical explanation entirely as a teaching tool. It is generally accepted that traditional grammar arose as an adaptation of classical Latin grammar, itself formed on Greek models, for the description of modern European languages, and was later extended to languages outside Europe. In essence, traditional grammar was created by the elevation of a set of structures for describing Latin into a linguistic theory suitable for the description of all languages, a universal grammar, with all the problems of incompatibility that might arise from such a process.

It is surprising that so little is understood about the origins of what is still the most ubiquitous of grammatical theories. Though the Greek and Roman grammatical traditions are thoroughly studied and well understood, the early stages of the extension of their theories to modern languages are virtually ignored in the literature on the history of linguistics. For example, in his *Ancient and Medieval Grammatical Theories in Europe* (1951), R. H. Robbins makes no mention of the earliest attempts to adapt Latin grammar to modern languages, and in his *A Short History of Linguistics* (1967), grammars of modern languages emerge suddenly and fully formed at the beginning of the sixteenth century. For Robbins, the Middle Ages was a period of linguistic non-creativity, dominated by theoretical ruminations on the grammatical theories of Priscian. In this he could not be farther from the truth.

Our best evidence suggests that the idea of using Latin grammar to describe modern languages may go as far back as the seventh century, to the *Auraicept na N'Éces*, an Irish primer for initiates into the *filid*, the guild of professional poets (Calder 1917). The oldest portions of this work contain discussions of gender and brief inflectional schemes which would be expanded upon in future centuries. From the tenth century, we have the Latin/Anglo-Saxon grammar of Ælfric of Eynsham, which uses Anglo-Saxon examples to illustrate Latin grammatical principles (Zupitza 1966), based on excerpts from Priscian (Porter 2002). Coming from the strong literary tradition of twelfth century Iceland is the *First Grammatical Treatise*, a proposal for orthographic reform using principles strikingly similar to modern phonemic analysis (Haugen 1972). All of these appear to be isolated works,

early glimmerings of an idea that would later become a full-blown obsession of scholars in the early years of printed books.

Well before this, however, a true intellectual movement dedicated to the description of a modern language had already been born and had run its course. It was initiated in about 1210 by a Catalan troubadour, Raimon Vidal de Besalú, when his short *Razos de Trobar* (Marshall 1972:1–25), intended to help his countrymen to master the Occitan language for the purpose of writing troubadour songs, became the stimulus for a grammatical tradition that, over the next century and a half, would produce a series of descriptions of Occitan of increasing depth and sophistication. Among them we may count: the *Donatz Proensals* of Uc Faidit, written in Italy between 1235 and 1245 (Marshall 1969), the *Regles de Trobar* of Jofre de Foixà written in Sicily between 1286 and 1291 (Marshall 1972:55–91), the *Doctrina d'Acort* of Terramagnino da Pisa from Sardinia between 1282 and 1296 (Marshall 1972:27–53), and, the culmination of the tradition, Volume III of the *Leys d'Amors* by Guilhem Molinier written in Toulouse between 1343 and 1356 (Anglade 1919).

The explicit aim of all the Occitan grammarians was to teach would-be troubadours to compose their songs properly, i.e., in grammatically correct language. A fascinating aspect of all these works is that they were directed toward the spoken, or sung, language and almost never address the question of how the language should be written. Considering that grammars up to then had all been connected with education in literacy (the word “grammar” itself refers to writing), this perhaps makes them unique among grammars until modern times. It is no coincidence that all but the last were written outside Occitania, since most coincide with the troubadour diaspora following the French conquest of Occitania in 1229, and the exportation of the tradition to Italy and Catalonia, and to the latter’s colonies in Sicily and Sardinia. By the time of the *Leys d'Amors*, the tradition had been dead in Occitania for half a century; the work was written as part of an attempt to restore the old language that had already begun to evolve into Middle Occitan. In every case, Old Occitan was being taught to people who did not normally speak it, for the sole purpose of song composition. The idea that someone might want to converse in the language or write letters or treatises in it never occurred to the grammarians of the Occitan tradition.

Yet the amount they accomplished within these limited goals is remarkable. The only model of grammatical description they had available to them was that of Latin, specifically as embodied in the *Ars Grammatica* of the fourth-century Donatus, and the *Institutiones Grammaticae* of the sixth-century Priscian. But using the grammar of one language to describe another, even a daughter language, creates obvious problems because each will inevitably contain grammatical phenomena not found in the other. What we observe in the Occitan grammatical tradition is the gradual recognition of these differences, the rejection of certain descriptive devices, and the invention of new devices to replace them.

I would like to focus my attention in this paper on several characteristics of Medieval Occitan not found in Classical Latin, and observe how they were handled by the successive grammarians of the Occitan tradition. Those characteristics are the following:

1. REDUCED NOUN DECLENSION. The complex system of six cases and five declensions of Latin was reduced in Occitan to two. The first is a masculine declension consisting of the



	Masculine		Feminine	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	-s	Ø	-a	-as
Oblique	Ø	-s	-a	-as

**Table 1.** Old Occitan nominal suffixes.

	Latin		Occitan	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
First Person	<i>amor</i>	<i>amamur</i>	<i>soi amatz</i>	<i>em amat</i>
Second Person	<i>amaris</i>	<i>amamini</i>	<i>est amatz</i>	<i>etz amat</i>
Third Person	<i>amatur</i>	<i>amantur</i>	<i>es amatz</i>	<i>son amat</i>

**Table 2.** Present passives.

		Singular	Plural
Preterite Perfect	1st	<i>amavi</i>	<i>amavimus</i>
	2nd	<i>amavisti</i>	<i>amavistis</i>
	3rd	<i>amavit</i>	<i>amaverunt</i>
Preterite Pluperfect	1st	<i>amaveram</i>	<i>amaveramus</i>
	2nd	<i>amaveras</i>	<i>amaveratis</i>
	3rd	<i>amaverat</i>	<i>amaverant</i>

		Singular	Plural
Simple Past	1st	<i>amei</i>	<i>amem</i>
	2nd	<i>ames</i>	<i>ametz</i>
	3rd	<i>amet</i>	<i>ameron</i>
Present Perfect	1st	<i>ai amat</i>	<i>avem amat</i>
	2nd	<i>as amat</i>	<i>avetz amat</i>
	3rd	<i>a amat</i>	<i>an amat</i>
Past Perfect	1st	<i>avia amat</i>	<i>aviam amat</i>
	2nd	<i>avias amat</i>	<i>aviatz amat</i>
	3rd	<i>avia amat</i>	<i>avian amat</i>

**Table 2.** Perfect tenses in Latin (left) and Occitan (right).

merest consonantal remnants of the nominative and accusative forms of the second declension of masculine nouns, i.e., two *-s* suffixes, one occurring only in the nominative singular and the other in the oblique plural. The second is a feminine declension with *-a* in the singular and *-as* in the plural, without distinction of case, descended from the accusatives of the Latin first declension (Table 1).

2. ARTICLES. Certain Latin demonstratives (*ille, illa*) and numbers (*unus, una*) were grammaticized into the articles of Medieval Occitan, producing a new grammatical category not found in Latin.

3. ANALYTIC PASSIVES AND PERFECTS. The Latin passive suffixes were replaced by the appropriate forms of the verb “to be” plus the past participle (Table 2), and new perfect tenses were created using the verbs “to have” and “to be” plus the past participle, leaving the forms descended from the Latin perfect preterit paradigm to become simple past tense forms (Table 3).

4. VARIATION. Latin's orthography had been codified since the beginning of the Roman Empire, and in the Middle Ages the language was read aloud using a simple set of pronunciation rules. Occitan orthography, on the other hand, was very free and could reflect a multitude of dialect differences throughout the region where it was spoken, often in no consistent way. This presented a challenge for those attempting to teach the language to foreigners. Though the focus in Occitan was on pronunciation rather than spelling, one had to know which of the available pronunciations to choose.

We will now look at how each of the Occitan grammarians deals with these four challenges.

Perhaps the only distinction of Raimon Vidal's *Razos de Trobar* is that it may be the first grammar of a Romance language. Other than that, it is the least adequate grammar in the Occitan tradition. Most of its dozen or so pages are devoted to the rules governing the assignment of the *-s* suffixes to nouns and adjectives, not surprising since this would be a difficulty for his Catalan audience, and to the deriding of well known troubadours for using first-person verb forms in the preterite when they should have used the third person. Vidal lists the six Latin cases when discussing nouns and adjectives, but their realization in Occitan is not explained and only partially exemplified. He does however, mention a contrast between the nominative/vocative and "the other cases," implying quite accurately a two-way contrast in the Occitan noun inflection system. There is no mention of any role that articles and prepositions might play in connection with the cases. The fact that the work does not include any real discussion of verb structure neatly avoids the question of how to handle the new analytic passives and perfects of Romance. As for variation, Vidal just recommends that all adopt the form of speech to be found in Lemosin and neighboring regions. It must be noted here that Vidal was himself a famous troubadour writing at the peak of the troubadour literary movement, making his perspective unique among the Occitan grammarians. In fairness to him, he probably considered himself more a poet than a grammarian.

Uc Faïdit's *Donatz Proensals* is entirely different and perhaps more deserving of the title of the first grammar of a Romance language. In a work four times the length of Vidal's, Faïdit aims at a complete description of the language, devoting sufficient space to a description of Occitan's complex verbal inflection system. Though he wrote a generation after Vidal, he wrote for an Italian audience, and there is no evidence that he was aware of Vidal's work. Neither is there any evidence that his own work was known outside of Italy until much later. It is the only such grammar to have a contemporary Latin translation, and two Italian translations were written in later centuries.

Faïdit defines what he calls the six noun cases of Occitan according to the use of articles and prepositions: nominative with *lo*, genitive with *de*, dative with *a*, and accusative with *lo*, failing to so define the ablative and vocative.<sup>1</sup> He then gives brief rules for the use of the *-s* suffixes, and never does recognize the article as a separate part of speech. In his

<sup>1</sup> The concept of prepositional cases is highly developed in the *Auraicept na N'Éces* (Calder 1917:136–45), to the point where the case scheme of Latin is expanded to three times its original size. However, the part of the text in which this occurs is not the canonical portion dating to the seventh century, but a very late interpolation, possibly as late as the time of Uc Faïdit.

extensive discussion of the four conjugations of verbs, he describes the passive as being formed with *sum, es, est* [*sic*] plus the past participle and then presents a correct passive indicative paradigm. When he comes to the perfects, he inconsistently lists the simple past forms of Occitan as its perfect preterit, and then lists as the pluperfect preterit the new analytic pluperfect form, with forms of *avia* plus the past participle. To add to the inconsistency, when it comes to the subjunctive perfect preterit, he lists the new analytical present perfect construction, not the simple past subjunctives. Like Vidal, Faidit's description ends with the verb, neglecting the preposition, conjunction, and interjection, despite having mentioned them at the beginning of the work. With regard to the question of variation, he does provide an extensive list of alternative verb forms at the end of his grammar, displaying a tolerance in this matter which contrasts with Vidal and his followers. There is also an appended rhyme dictionary.

Jofre de Foixà's *Regles de Trobar*, from the end of the thirteenth century, bills itself as a rewriting of Raimon Vidal's book for those who have not studied Latin grammar. Though it covers the same topics in the same order and is only slightly longer, Jofre's book has the added feature of providing definitions for grammatical concepts, often rather clever ones. For example, though he uses prepositions to define the genitive, dative, and ablative, the nominative and accusative are defined by their positions before and after the verb, in an anticipation of structural linguistics and a recognition of Occitan's new, more rigid, word order. Perhaps the most striking innovation is a page-long discussion of the various forms of articles which precedes the section on nouns, distinguishing a masculine singular nominative article *le* and accusative singular *lo*, a distinction made by no one else. However, the fact that Jofre uses the word "article" and not the Occitan word "*habitutz*" makes this passage look suspiciously like a later interpolation. When it comes to verbs, Jofre is nearly as disappointing as Vidal, though he does go beyond him by providing minimal definitions of verb categories before launching into a discussion of the misuse of first person verb forms for the third person in the preterite perfect, à la Vidal.

The contemporary *Doctrina d'Acort* of Terramagnino da Pisa is often viewed as a mere versification of Raimon Vidal's work, though spread over twice as many pages. It goes farther than that, though, in providing a far more extensive exemplification of grammatical forms using quotes from well-known troubadours, and giving paradigms of fully declined nouns. However, Terramagnino does not define the cases at all, other than to illustrate the ablative as preceded by the proposition *ab*, in a peculiar reversal of Faidit who gives markers for all cases but the ablative. However, he does make one striking innovation by introducing the technical terms *retz* and *oblics* to describe the nominative/vocative forms versus those of all the other cases, a contrast Vidal makes but does not provide a terminology for. His treatment of the verb perpetuates the inadequacies of Vidal and all his imitators by discussing only the same few errors of usage, this time in elegant versified form. His treatment of variation is merely a repetition of Vidal's exaltation of the speech of Lemosin.

By the time we come to the third volume of the *Leys d'Amors* of Guilhem Molinier, we are in the middle of the fourteenth century and in the midst of a mature grammatical tradition. Fifteen times the length of Vidal's work, the grammar contained in the *Leys d'Amors* was written as part of a set of rules to guide the activities of the *Consitori del Gay Saber* in

Toulouse, by then a quarter-century-old organization dedicated to the revivification of the troubadour tradition. Molinier's frequent mention of opposing opinions on grammatical subjects indicates the existence of a lively debate on such topics. For the first time in the tradition, explicit mention is made of the differences between the structure of Latin and that of Occitan. Perhaps the most surprising assertion in this work is that there are no declensions or conjugations in Occitan, a statement which goes too far, for sure, especially with regard to verb inflection, but does point to the recognition of important structural differences between the two languages. According to Molinier, case in Occitan is expressed by the *habitz*, i.e., the articles and the many article-plus-preposition contractions found in the language. The rules for the assignment of the *-s* suffixes are discussed adequately, but not as extensively as they are in the much shorter work of Vidal. Furthermore, he is unique among grammarians in treating this pattern as the norm for the language, considering all feminine nouns to be a class of exceptions rather than a declension. Continuing to distance the language from Latin, Molinier states that there is no passive in Occitan, that instead there is the use of *sum* and *habere* with the past participle. When he comes to listing the preterit perfect forms, he lists both the simple past forms and the new analytic perfect forms as equivalents, missing the new semantic distinction entirely. For the pluperfect preterit, however, he has only the new analytic construction to provide. Perhaps the only influence of the Vidalian tradition is the fact that the section on verbs is one-third the size of the section on nouns, adjectives and pronouns. As if in compensation for this, the work is enriched with extensive discussions of the process of contraction and the complex rules governing the sequence of tenses in complex sentences, topics often given short shrift even in modern grammars. Still, Molinier's resistance to the concept of verb conjugations in Occitan deprives him of a valuable device for clarifying the explanation of patterns of verb inflection.

With regard to variation, Molinier treats the problem with great seriousness, advising that pronunciation should follow that of the great troubadours, though when they are not a sufficient guide the reader should use the pronunciation current in his own diocese. Molinier reveals here that it is pronunciation that is important, not orthography, thus displaying an adherence to a phonetic approach to writing that had always been the source of Occitan's orthographic chaos. There is also the implication that regional variation is what lies behind much of the variation in orthographic practice. It must be noted here that Molinier is the only grammarian writing for native speakers of the language, though all the other grammarians wrote their grammars in Occitan rather than the language of their target populations.

The culmination of the Occitan grammatical tradition, Molinier's grammar would be the last grammar of the language for a very long time. The declining use of Occitan in the face of competition with French would make these early grammatical descriptions especially precious; collections of them often appear bound together in the same manuscript along with some easy reading material. Though the Occitan grammatical tradition ended before the invention of the printing press, the *Donatz Proensals* would become popular among Italian antiquarian scholars in following centuries, and the *Leys d'Amors* has held on

to its importance to the *Académie des Jeux Floraux* in Toulouse, the modern descendant of the *Consistori del Gai Saber*, up to the present day.

Considering that the best of these works were never forgotten, the failure of modern historians of linguistics to recognize the crucial role they must have played in the genesis of traditional grammar is surprising. In the short century and a half that the Occitan grammatical tradition existed, it evolved from a mechanical application of Latin grammatical structures to a recognition that most of these were unsuitable for the description of Occitan. Interestingly, modern grammarians of Old Occitan recognize two simple declensions of nouns and at least two conjugations of verbs; in this respect they are far more traditional than Guilhem Molinier, their predecessor by six and a half centuries.

In short, by the time of the explosion of grammars of modern languages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some of the problems of adapting the classical grammatical tradition to the description of modern European languages had long ago been solved. Remarkably, they had been solved not by philosophers ruminating on the concepts of the great Latin grammarians, but by poets attempting to keep alive as long as possible the tradition of the great Occitan singer-songwriters.



## REFERENCES

- ANGLADE, JOSEPH, ed. 1919. *Las Leys d'Amors: Manuscrit de l'Académie des Jeux Floraux*. Toulouse: Privat.
- CALDER, GEORGE, ed. 1917. *Auraicept na N'Éces: The scholar's primer*. Edinburgh: John Grant.
- HAUGEN, EINAR. 1972. *First grammatical treatise: The earliest Germanic phonology*. London: Longman.
- MARSHALL, J. H., ed. 1969. *The Donatz Proensal of Uc Faïdit*. London: Oxford University Press.
- , ed. 1972. *The Razos de Trobar of Raimon Vidal and associated texts*. London: Oxford University Press.
- PORTER, DAVID W., ed. 2002. *Excerptiones de Prisciano: The source for Aelfric's Latin-Old English grammar*. Rochester NY: D. S. Brewer.
- ROBINS, R. H. 1951. *Ancient and medieval grammatical theory in Europe*. London: G. Bell.
- . 1967. *A short history of linguistics*. London: Longman.
- ZUPITZA, JULIUS, ed. 1966. *Aelfrics Grammatik und Glossar*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung.





## “QUALITY OF LANGUAGE”: THE CHANGING FACE OF QUEBEC PRESCRIPTIVISM

MICHAEL D. KLIFFER  
*McMaster University*

THE FIRST WORD OF THIS PAPER’S TITLE, “Quality,” is intended to be ironic in the sense of echoic mention proposed in Sperber and Wilson 1981. As a linguist, I don’t believe any one kind of language to be intrinsically superior to another, and yet I must recognize that my perspective as a scholar often does not jibe with that of the non-linguist speaker. This disconnect is not a recent discovery. Bloomfield 1927 reported that even illiterate speakers of Menomini thought in terms of “good” and “bad” exemplars of their language. Many other instances from domains as diverse as language planning (cf. Thomas 1991:215–25) and newspaper columns treating controversial usages suggest that native speakers do indeed have, at the very least, a vague awareness of prescriptivism, regardless of their level of schooling.

A contention of this paper is that even non-variationist “mainstream” linguistics needs to take into account a francophone Quebecer’s prescriptive instincts, in order to account for the co-existence of and tension between popular and official usage. (By “non-variationist” I don’t mean an approach that rejects variation, but rather one that does not entail a specifically variationist framework.) Before looking at the details of the Quebec situation, I will provide two definitions. By “prescriptivism,” I mean simply any approach which recommends or mandates the usage or avoidance of linguistic units in a particular context or register, as opposed to an empirical or descriptive approach. Linguists often fail to distinguish between this broad sense of prescriptivism and a sub-type of it, “purism,” which not only prescribes a usage X but also dismisses a competing usage Y as intrinsically wrong. In this paper “prescriptivism” by itself denotes the broader, non-dismissive type. “Purism” will always entail condemnation of the non-standard.

Our discipline often adopts a puristic attitude towards prescriptivism, as in an introductory linguistics class, where students are usually told that describing is always preferable to prescribing. Prescriptivism is condemned as something which is not only unscientific, to be avoided at all costs in one’s work, but also as something which is socially harmful, as when some American social workers believed Black English speakers who resisted standard English to be mentally deficient (Henningson 1989:34–35). Yet, as a 1997 debate on *Linguist List* showed,<sup>1</sup> prescriptivism is for many of us more than just something to avoid while analyzing language. While acknowledging that prescriptivism can have both academically and socially harmful effects, several contributors asserted that to dismiss all types of it prevents

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://linguistlist.org/issues/8/8-1764.html>, <http://linguistlist.org/issues/8/8-1768.html>,  
<http://linguistlist.org/issues/8/8-1774.html>

us from understanding many facets of native speakers' behavior. A prescriptivist approach obviously makes sense in areas such as first-language literacy education as well as all aspects of second-language teaching, and even in linguistics instruction given in and about a second language, since the students may lack the native-like knowledge required for analysis. Prescriptivism, then, is at times appropriate.

In the next section, I will sketch the historical background of Quebec prescriptivism, followed by a discussion of how one contemporary analyst views the "language question" from the standpoint of language planning. I will conclude with an outsider's take on how Quebec prescriptivism has evolved.

1. A VERY SCHEMATIC HISTORY. To put it cryptically, attitudes toward Quebec French (henceforth QF) have evolved from an intemperate purism to a reflective, nuanced prescriptivism. This section attempts to explain this evolution via a historical sketch based on Leclerc 2008 and Poirier 2006. According to sporadic descriptions of the time, the language spoken during the era of New France (1534–1763) was fairly homogenous, a composite of the French spoken in western provinces like Normandy and Poitou. Poirier insists, contra Barbaud 1984, that it was definitely not a patois, in the sense of a local, stigmatized variety. He contends that even then there was competition between the Parisian French of the administration and the *habitants'* rural French. The latter prevailed because the administrators were not permanent residents in the colony and obviously were no longer a force after the Conquest.

With the fall of New France in 1760, the English at first attempted quick assimilation of the conquered. Such a policy proved impossible and was reversed within just over a decade. In an attempt to secure the Canadians' loyalty in the face of growing discontent from the 13 colonies to the south, the British passed the Quebec Act of 1774. It restored the traditional seigneurial system in lands settled before the Conquest, guaranteed the right to practice Catholicism, and reinstated the French civil law code. Even though it said nothing about language, its concessions to the French-Canadians were clearly instrumental in keeping their language alive.

In 1791, the Constitution Act divided the colony into a western part, Upper Canada, largely populated with United Empire Loyalists who had fled the American Revolution, and an eastern part, Lower Canada, largely francophone. This division did little to calm tensions between the English and French in Lower Canada, where francophones were prohibited from taking positions in the civil service, trade and commerce were almost entirely in the hands of the English, and government-funded schools were to be under Anglican control, and so were massively boycotted and even sometimes burned down by the Canadians, who consequently saw their illiteracy rate climb to 96 percent in 1810.

French-Canadian resentment of English domination reached a peak in 1837, when the *patriote* Louis-Joseph Papineau led a rebellion which was swiftly and bloodily put down. The British government commissioned Lord Durham to produce a report which recommended reunification of the Canadas and submersion of the French into English culture via massive anglophone immigration into what had been Lower Canada. The Act of Union of 1840 created a single assembly and was the first legislation to declare English as the sole



official language of the colony. Thanks largely to the efforts of the politician Louis-Hyppolite Lafontaine to have French given at least some recognition in the Assembly, as of 1849 all laws had to be officially adopted in both languages. Such a bare-bones official status for French lasted until the late 1960s.

Concentrated in urban centers, the English in Quebec enjoyed an economic boom in the mid-nineteenth century, while the French were mostly confined to the land, as "hewers of wood and drawers of water," to quote Trollope (1862:48). Between 1840 and 1930, largely because little arable land was left, French Quebec lost five to ten percent of its population *each year* to emigration, mainly to the U.S. The English, on the other hand, poured into Montreal, making it a predominantly anglophone city between 1831 and 1865. Quebec City, today massively francophone, had over 40 percent non-francophone inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century.

Poirier (2006:82–83) contends that linguistic purism in Quebec goes back only to the 1840s. Documentary evidence suggests that, until that decade, the *habitants* were proud of their language and culture, which they identified as Canadian rather than French. In a gesture that seems quite ironic today, the Société St-Jean Baptiste in 1834 proposed the maple leaf as their emblem. For Poirier, the French-Canadians' linguistic insecurity arose only with the failure of the 1837 rebellion and the ensuing English determination to assimilate them. The puristic condemnation of their language began with a manual of correction by an American clergyman, Thomas Maguire, and soon spread to the French-Canadian elite, who believed that only by adopting Parisian norms could they ensure respect and recognition for their language by the English. This social downgrading of Canadian French and adulation of an idealized Parisian model would continue until the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s.

The nineteenth century demographic shifts also weighed heavily against French. As francophones began migrating to Montreal from the impoverished countryside, the anglophone numerical superiority disappeared but the Anglophones' socio-economic and linguistic dominance continued. French-Canadians in Montreal, whether of the elite or the working-class, were forced to learn English for their economic survival, a one-way bilingualism that has been reversed only in the past two decades. This diglossia meant that urban French-Canadians borrowed extensively from English, a factor that fed the francophone intelligentsia's reaction against all forms of *joual*, everyday, low-status street French. The campaigns against anglicisms, coupled with the above-mentioned promotion of Parisian French as norm, created among francophones a deep-seated linguistic insecurity that surfaces even today, although it has considerably diminished.

I have dwelt on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because it is difficult to understand today's francophone linguistic assertiveness without knowing what led up to it. The second-class status of French in Quebec and francophone resignation to it remained constant until the 1960s: receiving department store catalogues and circulars in English and being served by sales people who did not speak French were accepted facts of life until the Quiet Revolution. Language legislation protecting French was first introduced in the 1960s, with numerous advances and retreats until the sovereigntist Parti Québécois government in 1977 passed the Charter of the French Language, also known as Bill 101. This law was the first to effectively give French the status of common language. It made French the

only permissible language on signs and required all children to enroll in French language schools unless their parents had attended English schools in Quebec. Since then it has been modified to be less exclusionary: English on signs is now allowed, provided it is less prominent than French, and Canadian citizens who have attended English schools anywhere in Canada may now send their children to a Quebec English school.

A major effect of Bill 101 was to reverse the direction of one-way bilingualism. Previously, the vast majority of bilingual Quebecers were francophone; by the early 1990s anglophones had a significantly larger proportion of bilinguals than did francophones. It could also be argued that the language legislation, ironically, has contributed to waning support for sovereignty, since it has reduced francophones' linguistic insecurity. English has certainly not disappeared from the workplace, especially in areas like technology and science, but French is now entrenched as the dominant language of work. I don't wish to paint too rosy a picture: because of the preponderance of English outside Quebec, there is still much pressure for francophones to learn Canada's other official language, but nobody talks any longer about the possible disappearance of French, a constant theme in the media and academia even up to the 1980s. The government initiatives to protect French have largely succeeded, but making it the language of work has brought about in some ways even more uncertainty, as Quebecers debate which *kind* of French should be the official one. Not surprisingly, prescriptivism is much in evidence during such debates.

2. THE CONTINUING "LANGUAGE QUESTION." Partly because of isolation from France but especially owing to the social and educational gulf between the Quebec intelligentsia and the working-class, there evolved an equally wide divergence between the written, largely Parisian standard and colloquial registers. One indicator of this gulf is that Quebec films shown in France have often been subtitled, a fact that for purists confirms the corrupt nature of everyday Quebec speech but from a more objective standpoint signals a mutual incomprehensibility due to often separate paths of innovation. Such distinctness is to be expected, since working-class European French and Quebec speech communities had for a long time very limited contact. More importantly, the social conditions affecting QF, notably pressure from English and insufficient backing from the federal and provincial governments, meant that popular Québécois essentially followed its own course. Since the nineteenth century, purists had dismissed *joual* as a cancerous, defective form of communication, but by the 1960s *joual* became for a good number of Quebec writers a source of pride, a crucial part of Quebecers' identity. By the 1970s a war raged between *joual*'s defenders and critics, especially over the extent to which standard QF should recognize and even adopt aspects of *joual*<sup>2</sup>. To give some indication of how this *querelle du joual* has been resolved, I will now examine Maurais 1999, a report on "language quality" prepared for the Council of the French Language.

<sup>2</sup> The publication in 1993 of the dictionary *Le Robert québécois d'aujourd'hui* triggered a furor not only because it recorded *joual* expressions but also because it actually included the word *joual*. This constituted, in the eyes of purists, a shameful acknowledgment of Quebec's everyday linguistic reality by France, the very country which was supposed to uphold language quality.

In Quebec, "*la qualité de la langue*" has become a ubiquitous expression, surfacing virtually everywhere non-linguists gather to discuss QF; its constant presence is arguably a sign that prescriptivism and often purism still very much inform Quebecers' conception of their language, in spite of ever increasing attention paid to linguists in the educational system and language planning bodies.

The heart of Maurais's report is a series of recommendations to public and private institutions for improving the quality of French. These institutions include schools, universities, government agencies, the Quebec Office of the French Language, the media, and the IT sector. My review will focus on Maurais's definition of language quality and how it pertains to his eleven recommendations.

It is hard to imagine an expression that raises linguists' eyebrows more quickly than "language quality." Our immediate reaction is to pin a purist label on whoever uses this phrase. After all, "quality" implies value judgments which label certain usages as inherently superior to others. Even a quick perusal of Maurais's report will nevertheless bring us to reconsider. He begins with an admission that "language quality" is not an easy thing to define. He is disappointed that linguists have little or nothing to say about language quality because their position leaves the concept in the hands of non-specialists. He attempts to base a definition on the proposal of Chantefort 1980, a generative treatment that argues for a distinction between "internal" and "external" quality. The former concerns grammaticality and acceptability, the latter, stylistic and sociological factors such as avoidance of anglicisms. Maurais rejects Chantefort's definition of internal quality with the familiar argument that it is based on the overly idealized notion of speaker/hearer competence. As well, Chantefort's external quality has too limited a role: it is based largely on puristic issues. For Garvin 1959, though, what determines a standard language is not just purism (in Garvin's terms, "separation") but several other functions like intellectualisation and social unification (Maurais 1999:41).

For Maurais, any language-internal quality must include not only the stable core but also variation, i.e., there would be specification of what preferred variants make up the standard, in explicit contradistinction to stigmatized variants like regionalisms and certain neologisms. The relevant factors external to the code would be esthetic and sociological in the largest sense, involving traditional stylistic considerations like clarity and logic, but also respect for taboos, ranging from political correctness to religious and sexual decorum. Such a definition must have built-in flexibility: the external factors are much more susceptible to change and individual choice. A case in point is literary discourse, which may well violate the rulings on "quality" syntax and lexicon, as seen with the winners of literary prizes such as the Prix Jules-Fournier. Moreover, the social context may have a huge impact on linguistic choices: in a tavern, rigidly adhering to the standard would likely trigger mockery from one's fellow drinkers, while at the other extreme, as in a government dispatch, any deviation from the standard would be condemned. Finally, Maurais insists that the role of the schools is not to stamp out deviations from the norm, but to widen students' repertoire, i.e., make them aware of standard options they may not have learned at home, and to leave the choice of standard or non-standard variants up to the individual. For linguists, such

remarks hardly seem controversial: I bring them up to show how far language planning has evolved in Quebec since the puristic treatments which prevailed until the 60s.

Having provided this multi-faceted definition of language quality, Maurais proposes eleven principles which he believes should inform policies aimed at its improvement:

1. The quality of a language is not independent of its status.
2. We must distinguish institutional from private use of language.
3. Bi- or multi-lingualism and comparison of two languages help to improve knowledge of one's native language.
4. In our culture, we tend to judge spoken language according to the rules of written language.
5. Linguistic "folklorisation" can be resisted via a modern and dynamic model of language.
6. We can avoid purism's excesses if we take linguistic variation into account.
7. Language quality is more than a crusade against anglicisms.
8. Language planning, including matters concerning language quality, should not depend on individual initiatives alone.
9. The standard language should be distinguished from literary language.
10. A native language cannot be taught in the same way as a second language.
11. Deficiencies in written language are more than just orthographic.

As with his definition of language quality, most of these principles are hardly the stuff of polemics. The last two seem today self-evident, but we need to place them in a specifically Quebec educational context. Underlying #10 is the fact that until the 70s, most French teachers considered all linguistic errors to be homogeneous manifestations of "bad French," regardless of the student's background<sup>3</sup>. More insightful are principles 1, 2, and 8. These reflect the 1977 upgrade in the status of French, with profound repercussions for both individuals and institutions. For Maurais, only when an authority bestows upon a language such recognition can it become more than a mundane instrument of communication, and the extension of its domains of usage requires efforts at the institutional level rather than just by individuals, as seen notably in the flourishing of terminology studies since the 1970s in both government and academic circles.

Likewise unremarkable from socio- and applied-linguistics standpoints are Principles 3, 6, and 7. Contrastive linguistics has long advocated inter-language comparison in L2 teaching, but the advantages of such comparison for increasing metalinguistic awareness of L1 are likewise undeniable. Secondly, linguists' classical response to purism has been variation, and, finally, Quebec linguists have long opposed the cultural elite's tendency to blame English for all deviations from the standard.

---

<sup>3</sup> In English Canada too, this confusion of native and non-native learners occurs. For instance, in a fourth year French stylistics class for anglophones at my university, one text, from Quebec, focused on anglicisms to avoid: these were anglicisms which only Quebec francophones would produce, i.e., it would never occur to an advanced anglophone student unfamiliar with colloquial Quebec usage to use them spontaneously.

Of Maurais's eleven principles, just two reflect traditional puristic disparagement of everyday spoken QF. Principle 4 defends judging and, implicitly, refashioning the colloquial according to the written. Citing Bourdieu and Boltanski 1975 and Vygotsky 1985, Maurais emphasizes that literacy profoundly affects one's oral usage, both socially and cognitively. Consequently, language quality naturally incorporates a bias towards the written. Again, this idea is hardly contentious, but in a context where the establishment routinely shows contempt for its own colloquial usage, the link with purism is all too evident. Principle 5 is even more egregious, as it assumes that "folkloric" QF, i.e., *joual*, must be resisted via imposition of "modern and dynamic models", i.e., presumably the norms of international French. This flies in the face of Maurais's insistence that a school's role is not to stamp out colloquial variants, but to widen students' repertoire, giving them the option of adopting or not standard forms.

Overall, Maurais is representative of the evolution in Quebec from a black-and-white purism to a nuanced, well-informed grappling with the question of standardization. His leitmotif of "quality" reflects the ongoing prescriptivism noticeable at all levels of Quebec society. To reiterate a point from the introduction, though, to recommend some forms over others is a habit observable in all language communities.

Maurais's report was published almost a decade ago, but its ambivalence towards spoken QF is still very much with us. Writing in Quebec's most prestigious newspaper, *Le Devoir*, on March 15, 2008, Gil Courtemanche attacked the Executive Council of the nationalist Parti Québécois for proposing that schools teach "written and spoken standard québécois," rather than French. Courtemanche's arguments are familiar ones (e.g., the proposal stems from obsessive identity politics and would lead to even more isolation of Quebec, a language is more than a fragmentary collection of particularisms, Belgians and Swiss living in francophone areas still consider themselves French speakers in spite of regionalisms, etc.) What is more interesting about Courtemanche's arguments is that he simultaneously insists on the realities of spoken Quebec usage, for instance, *chat* and *walkman* have much higher frequency than the official *clavardage* and *baladeur*, while at the same time he denigrates colloquial morpho-syntax and lexicon. In his words, by enshrining spoken québécois as an oral standard, the PQ would impose upon Quebecers ignorance and linguistic complacency, mediocrity, and the uselessness of syntax: these are epithets that purists have been hurling for decades at colloquial QF, as seen in classic treatments of the language question such as Desbiens 1960.<sup>4</sup>

3. AN OUTSIDER'S TAKE ON QF PRESCRIPTIVISM. Quebec prescriptivism is generally typical of language planning around the world, reflecting the ubiquitous ongoing tension between colloquial and elite usages. Nevertheless, the linguistic insecurity engendered by over two centuries of influence from English, added to the pan-francophone obsession with linguistic correctness, has brought prescriptivism here much more onto centre stage than in most other language communities. In any case, it is impossible to imagine any current broad

<sup>4</sup> For further proof that the "question de la langue" is still a burning one, go to <http://www.vigile.net/+Qualite-de-la-langue->

account of QF (whether descriptive or theoretical) that does not in some respects acknowledge prescriptivism. This has long been a practice in the best French dictionaries like the *Robert* and *Larousse*, where entries at the literary and colloquial extremes are included but flagged as socially marked. As Maurais insisted, allowing French to become the province's common, working language has inevitably meant an increased preoccupation with social and regional variation. Establishing a Quebec standard, still a work in progress, is a necessarily prescriptive task but one which has become far more nuanced and dispassionate than the puristic treatments which prevailed until the adoption of the Charter.



## REFERENCES

- BARBAUD, PHILIPPE. 1984. *Le choc des patois en Nouvelle-France*. Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval du Québec.
- BLOOMFIELD, LEONARD. 1927. Literate and illiterate speech. *American speech* 2:432–38.
- BOURDIEU, PIERRE & LUC BOLTANSKI. 1975. Le fétichisme de la langue. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 4:2.
- CHANTEFORT, PIERRE. 1980. Pour une définition de la “qualité de la langue”. In *Actes du colloque “La qualité de la langue ... après la loi 101.”* Documentation du Conseil de la langue française 3, 30–31. Quebec: Conseil de la langue française.
- COURTEMANCHE, GIL. 2008. Parler le créole québécois? *Le Devoir*, 15 March 2008. Montreal.
- DESBIENS, JEAN-PAUL. 1960. *Les insolences du frère Untel*. Montreal: Éditions de l'homme.
- GARVIN, PAUL. 1959. The standard language problem: Concepts and methods. *Anthropological linguistics* 1(2):28–31.
- HENNINGSON, MANFRED. 1989. The politics of purity and exclusion: Literary and linguistic movements of political empowerment in America, Africa, the South Pacific and Europe. In *The politics of language purism*. Contributions to the sociology of language 54, ed. Björn H. Jernudd & Michael Shapiro, 31–52. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- LECLERC, JACQUES. 2008. Histoire du français au Québec. <http://www.tlfg.ulaval.ca/axl/francophonie/histfrnqc.htm> (accessed May 27, 2008).
- Le Petit Larousse illustré*. 2008. Paris: Editions Larousse.
- Le Petit Robert*. 2005. *Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue Française*, ed. Josette Roy-Devobe. Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert.
- MAURIS, JACQUES. 1999. *La qualité de la langue: Un projet de société*. Quebec: Conseil de la langue française.
- POIRIER, CLAUDE. 2006. Les fondements historiques de la conscience linguistique des Québécois. In *Le rotte della libertà. Atti del Convegno internazionale Monopoli*, ed. Giovanni Dotoli, 77–85. Fasano: Schena.

- SPERBER, DAN & DEIRDRE WILSON. 1981. Irony and the use-mention distinction. In *Radical pragmatics*, ed. Peter Cole, 295–318. New York: Academic Press.
- THOMAS, GEORGE. 1991. *Linguistic purism*. London: Longman.
- TROLLOPE, ANTHONY. 1862. *North America*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- VYGOTSKY, LEV SEMENOVICH. 1985[1934]. *Pensée et langage*. Paris: Les Éditions sociales.







## PLACES NAMED FOR AN ODOR, OR RECALLING THE FORMER HOME

SAUL LEVIN

*University of New York at Binghamton*

THE NAME OF A CITY records something that distinguishes this place from others. Often the first settlers kept in mind the city or country from which they had come. Or uppermost for them was the belief or hope that they were building a new city. The evidence reaches back to languages spoken thousands of years ago, but still available to modern research; those who knew them carved the words on stone or wrote the words in ink on a durable surface.

Many cities of ancient Greece were named for something there with an unusual odor. The meaning of *Σελινοῦς* is obvious, ‘smelling of celery’.<sup>1</sup> A lesser Greek city on the coast of Asia Minor was *Μυοῦς* ‘smelling of mice’; here the noun for the animal, familiar though not large, is widespread among the languages of Europe: Greek *μῦς* (accusative singular *μῦν*), Latin *mūs*, Old English and Old High German *mus*.

Not invariably does the name of the city, even while expressing something fragrant, contain a morpheme that means ‘smelling’. The island city *Ρόδος* was so-called because of the flowers *ρόδα* (a neuter collective; the singular is *ρόδον*). Most islands of the Aegean Sea were feminine singular and their nominative case ended in *-ος*.<sup>2</sup>

Other Greek cities were *Μαλωνεῖς* ‘smelling of apple’, *Φλ(ε)ιοῦς* ‘Smelly-Doorpost(?)’, *Συράκουσαι* ‘smelling of fish-hawks (or their excreta)’. These names are feminine plural.<sup>3</sup>

But often an old name was taken over for a later settlement, whether or not it was physically appropriate. Some English settlers on the shore of Massachusetts Bay in 1630 thought of the town in East Anglia, where they had lived. The older *Boston*, across the sea, was to be just as dear to them and their descendants. It hardly mattered what the *Bos-* part meant when William the Conqueror, in the eleventh century, had every part of England surveyed for the Domesday Book. (Although the meaning ‘cowstall’ does provide a transition between odors and former homes.)

The name of many places expresses outright that this one is new. On the Atlantic coast of America, the Netherlanders called their town *Nieuw Amsterdam*. Within a generation, they lost a war against England, although many of them were treated leniently as owners of

---

<sup>1</sup> In the majuscule Greek letters of the original texts, *ΣΕΛΙΝΟΥΣ*; transliterated into Latin capitals *SELINVS*.

<sup>2</sup> The Latin equivalent *rosa* is feminine. The prehistoric link between *rosa* and *ρόδον* or *ρόδα* is obscure.

<sup>3</sup> Whether the accent should be *Συράκουσαι* or *Συρακοῦσαι* is uncertain in the ancient sources. Also uncertain is what kind of animal is meant. A plausible Latin cognate *sorex* (nominative plural *sorices*) would be no bird but the mammal; thus the place-name meant originally ‘smelling of shrew-mice’.

private property. The Englishmen shifted the name of the town and of the colony to *New York*; some of them, no doubt, loved the city in northern England. They also had a political motive to honor the Duke of York, brother of King Charles the Second, who had no legitimate heir to the throne of England and of Scotland.

As some from the new Boston moved on to the Connecticut River, this inland town was called *Hartford*, as a safe place to cross. Anyone familiar with the English language, even one not acquainted with Hartford in England, would recognize this as a place-name, since the large wild beast was similar in America and in Europe.<sup>4</sup>

It suffices to note for my present purpose that *Massachusetts* and *Connecticut* were adapted loosely from an indigenous language to fit the sounds and the spelling of English. But *New London*, settled along the coast, adhered to a modified pattern within English. For the separate part of Massachusetts, a medieval name was chosen: *Maine*, from a region of France.

The colony of New York, and thereafter the State of New York, was settled so rapidly that dozens of new names were needed. So the classical heritage from the Mediterranean was exploited: *Utica*, *Ithaca*, *Rome*, *Troy*, *Palmyra*, etc. *Syracuse* grew to be the largest city between the seacoast and Lake Ontario.

The recent model for this practice came from *Philadelphia*, which was founded in 1680 by William Penn. He intended the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be a refuge for the members of the Society of Friends, whom others derisively called Quakers. He liked the name Philadelphia in the last book of the New Testament, where it was among the seven cities of Asia (Minor), according to the *Apocalypse* (1:11, 3:7). The Greek compound name encouraged an interpretation "City of Brotherly Love." A more accurate history of the third century B.C. would have noted that the original name Φιλαδέλφια (or Φιλαδελφεία) was on the model of Ἀλεξάνδρεια, founded by the great conqueror Alexander. Upon his death, one of his generals, Πτολεμαῖος (Ptolemy in English) took over Egypt and parts of western Asia. The son of the first Πτολεμαῖος took or received the nickname Φιλάδελφος, for marrying his own sister. He insisted that this was not incest, but a resumption of what his remote predecessors had done regularly when they ruled Egypt in the age of the Pyramids.

Φίλ- or Φίλο-, at the beginning of a Greek personal name, goes back to a passer-by over-hearing or repeating what a rider or charioteer shouted. A favorite name, with the vocative ending, was Φίλιππε 'Dear-Horse'. The vocative form, taken over into Latin as *Philippe*, survives in Spanish as *Felipe*.

In Southern Italy several cities were named for their apples. One of them, *Abella*, maintained an obvious cognate to the Germanic languages of northern Europe. Vergil described poetically "maliferae moenia ... Abellae" (*Aeneid*, 7:740; 'the walls of apple-bearing Abella'). But another name, almost a synonym of Abella, underwent a misleading change in Latin: MALEVENTVM 'apple-scented' was wrongly re-interpreted as 'ill-scented'; hence that

<sup>4</sup> However, in the English language of North America, the common noun *hart* is no longer applied to any kind of wild animal. By historical research I might verify or disprove these details about Hartford on the Connecticut River.

half was replaced. Instead, *Benevento* 'well-scented' is nowadays printed on the road-maps of Italy; this hilltop is long famous for a monastery.

The names of places are a rich heritage for a linguist or historian who cares about the shifting circumstances of human experience. Near the southern tip of the Italian peninsula are minor towns named *Santa Venere* from the name for Venus; this combination seems to accord with the model of *Santa Maria*, *Santa Barbara*, etc. The worship of a divine female was an old institution in much of Europe and Asia.

Much of the scattered evidence was gathered by me as an article, "The Perfumed Goddess" in *Bucknell Review*, 24:49–59 (1978). The goddess in the Greek of Homer and of those Attic poets was Ἀφροδίτη. Her counterpart in the religion of ancient Rome was Venus; the name is feminine, with the accusative case *Venerem*; but its structure otherwise is like a neuter noun expressing an abstraction such as *genus*, exactly cognate to the Greek γένος and formed from a two-consonant root *g-n*. (A Germanic cognate is *kin* in modern English.)

The center, from which the cult of Ἀφροδίτη spread, was the large island *Cyprus* (the Latin adaptation of Κύπρος). There she was often known as *Κυθέρεια*, seemingly a derivative from a smaller island *Κύθηρα*—just off the coast of the Peloponnese. Many of her temples attracted men or women eager for either sexual stimulation or else a successful pregnancy. Ἀφροδίτη was a Greek phonetic modification of her Phoenician name ʾštrʾt ʾštrʾt 'Ashtoreth' (I Kings 11:5) in Sidon and other cities.

When the Christian religion overcame the older cults, reminders here and there still referred to the previous divinities. I served in 1944 and 1945 at the message center of the American army, located in the basement of the Reggia di Caserta. On a day off I walked west to the present town *Santa Maria di Capua Vetere*; on a weekend I visited Rome and there I toured many churches, including *Santa Maria sopra Minerva* and *Santa Maria in Ara Celi*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Caserta*, the minor Italian city, means etymologically 'House-aloft' or 'Hilltop-house'. The tiny village, less than a mile to the west, is *Casagiove* (not indicated on any map known to me) 'House-[of]-Jove'. The name hints that during pre-Christian time there stood in a temple a statue of Jupiter, king of the gods.



## REFERENCES

LEVIN, SAUL. 1978. The perfumed goddess. *Bucknell review* 24:49–59.





## PROLEGOMENA TO SAUL LEVIN'S STUDIES OF SEMITIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN

J. P. MAHER

I differ from many writers... whose strongest credentials are a Ph.D. (or an equivalent degree in theology) under the tutelage of a highly reputed professor, who in his youth went through a similar apprenticeship. –The trouble with that sort of guidance is that in effect, if not always deliberately, the junior scholar is forever committed to his mentor's ideology... [S]cholarship, alas, is riddled with fallacies, some of which go back more than a few generations.—Saul Levin, *Guide to the Bible* (2009)

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE on Historical Linguistics (3ICHL) was held in August 1977 at the University of Hamburg. It brought together nearly a hundred scholars, including Raimo Anttila, Eugenio Coseriu, Ernst Pulgram, Henning Andersen, Niels Danielsen, James Poultney, Henry Hoenigswald, Konrad Koerner, Yakov Malkiel, to name a few.<sup>1</sup>

Saul Levin's 3ICHL paper was on the cognates Hebrew *'adam*, 'man' and Latin *hūmus* 'earth, soil' and congeners. It was one of the most memorable contributions to the conference. The term *cognate* here means "historically related," whether by descent from a common ancestor, by diffusion from one society to another, or any combination of these. Hostile critics have taken the term *cognate* to refer narrowly to a genetic relative, so to speak, *à la* "mother tongue, sister and daughter languages," etc. In Italian your *cognato* is a brother-in-law, not a blood relative.<sup>2</sup> Anyone looking for a balanced and competent appraisal of Levin's work should begin with J. P. Brown (1997).

My first meeting with Saul Levin was in 1971, when I was on a visit to my alma mater.<sup>3</sup> We had never heard of each other. We exchanged offprints and have stayed in touch ever

---

<sup>1</sup> Attendees reported hearing from mainstream linguists that they would not attend, claiming the conference would be biased against them. Would they have boycotted a conference biased in their favor?

<sup>2</sup> Levin compares some 'possible remote cognates' to the Semitic root *mlʾ* 'full' (1995:182). He compares forms in Tagalog, Malay, Turkish, Mandarin Chinese, etc. Kaye (1999) incautiously ignores Levin's cautionary term *remote* and his explicit concept of diffusion of trade terms becoming totally *naturalized* words. In English, *cognate* and *loanword* are not mutually exclusive; since, next to *father*, English *paternal* is a loanword, a borrowing by a Germanic language of an Italic cognate, a *tatsama*.

<sup>3</sup> Now called Binghamton University, the school was founded after World War II for veterans in Binghamton, Johnson City, and Endicott, NY, as Triple Cities College, a branch of Syracuse University. The school was re-named for local Revolutionary War figure, Robert Harpur, on its take-over by the State of New York. A clerk in the Surveyor General's office, Harpur is thought to be the man who adopted classical names for the townships of Aurelius, Brutus, Camillus, Cato, Cicero, Dryden, Fabius, Galen, Hannibal, Hector, Homer, Junius, Locke, Lysander, Manlius,

since. With some ancient Indo-European languages and a batch of modern ones in my kit, I was equipped with some pre-requisites for grappling with Saul's work. But I did not have any Hebrew or other Semitic languages. I wrongly assumed at first that Saul had been brought up in the rabbinical tradition, just as I had worked my way through and out of Catholic school and seminaries on my path from priestly celibacy to the asceticism of U.S. linguistics of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Saul's was not a religious family. He first read the Bible when he was twenty-five years old and took to reading Scripture not for salvation, but to see for himself what was there.

For the next three years after meeting Saul Levin I read a good bit of his work. It was hard going, but I accumulated an informed outsider's familiarity with Semitic. You get to that point when you can ask questions. Yaron Matras (1999) recommends: first read Levin's chapter, "Echoes of Prehistoric Life and Culture," browse the indices, then read it like an encyclopedia. He also advises: "...there are in my opinion two ways of appreciating the book—single and wholesale. It can be used as a stimulating source of information on single suspected cognates, or it can be taken in its entirety to represent a mystery yet unsolved."

Saul Levin communicates a specialist's findings to scholars who want to follow developments outside their own special fields. And he works with real texts, not models. This is how the LSA worked in 1925. One member, Edward Sapir, had interests ranging from Europe to America to Tibet and Africa; he applied the discipline and disciplines he learned in Germanic philology to American Indian languages and more. Sapir wrote "Internal Evidence from the Language for the Northern Origin of the Navaho" (1936) in a manner meant to be comprehensible to readers with a total lack of the Navaho language. Like me, Sapir dealt there with just nine etymologies. The nucleus of Levin's work is some eighty etymologies, with thousands of ramifications.

Levin argues that Hebrew is aberrant in the Semitic family and at bottom is an Indo-European language with a Semitic, in particular an Akkadian superstratum. Only with this awareness can readers fathom Levin's ideas, chief of which is that Hebrew, from the evidence of lexical items in attested contexts, shares with Indo-European biconsonantal roots, inflexions, productive morphological patterning, and ablaut.

This contradicts the simple idea of the Nostratic and Afro-Asiatic schools that Semitic and Indo-European branch off from a common ancestor. To borrow a concept from plate tectonics, there have been many subductions of Indo-European and Semitic societies and languages. Traces of their "plate tectonics" pervade the record called history, whether such

---

Marcellus, Milton, Ovid, Pompey, Romulus, Scipio, Sempronius, Solon, Sterling, Tully, Ulysses, Virgil. Fine wooden houses in the Classical Revival style, popularly known as "southern colonial", dot the countryside and towns; marble is used in the capital. I had just transferred there from St Bernard's Seminary and College in Rochester after concluding I was to flunk celibacy. Harpur's strength in humanities and medieval studies made it a congenial place for a student migrating from the Middle Ages. I augmented my Greek and Latin with courses in Italian language, art and music, Middle and English, and Russian language, geography and history. Today Binghamton University is rated among the best public universities in the United States.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Joos (1957:96): "Children want explanations, and there is a child in each of us; descriptivism makes a virtue of not pampering the child."

is recorded in texts or retrieved from other evidence. Because of the substratum/superstratum relation, no reconstruction of any proto-language ancestral to both Semitic and Indo-European is feasible until contact matters have been sorted out, which is what Saul Levin is doing.

Semitic and I-E peoples have been in contact for millennia. Contacts of I-E, Semitic and Egyptian in historical times go back farther back than lusty old Samson and Delilah, or giant Goliath and boy David, or the love triangle of King David and Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. Egyptologists in the 1920s shook the scientific world with the discovery of the Amarna letters, in which the widow of an Egyptian king is involved in match-making with the Hittite King Suppiluliuma. We may assume that the matchmaking and subsequent pillow talk were conducted in Egyptian and /or in Hittite, maybe with other language(s) tossed in. Frank Kammerzell (Kammerzell, Borchers, & Weniger 2001) finds evidence for contact between Indo-European and Ancient Egyptian in the proto-period.

Egypt was ruled for generations by the I-E Hyksos. Then came I-E Seleucids and Ptolemies. Farther West in today's Tunis, Semitic Dido loved and lost I-E Aeneas. Hannibal and Cato had it out. Maccabees vied with Romans. Saul of Tarsus learned his letters in Greek and Hebrew. Jihads and Crusades came and sometimes went, Reagan vied with Gaddafi, Bush 41 with Saddam, Bush 43 with Saddam and those who moved into the vacuum left by his removal.

The picture snapped into focus for me when I read the paper that Saul Levin submitted for the first LACUS Forum in 1974. The title was a sleeper—"Some Occupational Terms in Greek and Hebrew." Levin demonstrated that the Oedipus tale and the Moses story share elements from common ancient sources. I knew it would turn out to be sensational to a learned audience, so I scheduled it for the last paper of the meeting, to go out with a bang. The meeting went out with a bang.

THE BORDERS OF SEMITIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN. Ten years after the end of WW II, my professor at The Catholic University of America Martin R. P. McGuire mimeographed a syllabus, typed at his own expense, for Introduction to Classical Studies.<sup>5</sup> I augment it a bit here and prose up McGuire's catch-phrase format:

Indo-European unity ended in the course of the third millennium B.C., with migrations of Indo-European speakers and the emergence into the light of history of

<sup>5</sup> This, rather than "Classical Philology" was McGuire's preferred term because of the confusion of "philology" with "linguistics" in English countries (1954:32). About a decade later, on the dread news that he had an incurable cancer, McGuire was offered an honorary degree by The Catholic University of America. McGuire declined the consolation prize. Had the pontifical university, he told them, provided money for a typist for him when he was young and productive, that would have been genuine support of scholarship. This melancholy information was passed on to me in Hamburg in 1975 by another distinguished scholar of the university, Bernard Peebles. At the age of 70. Peebles, already retired, was shot one evening by a hold-up man in Northeast Washington. He got home, but bled to death before help arrived. Peebles shared an irony with me that MRPMcG himself would have relished: the day of McGuire's death was the Ides of March.

the various Indo-European dialects. Theories on the original home of the Indo-Europeans have swung with changes of fashion. From the 1930s to World War II the Baltic homeland was much in favor in Northern Europe among misguided patriots. In the mid-1950s there is a general return to the old hypothesis (of Schrader and Nehring) that the original I-E home is to be sought in the region north of the Black Sea.

A *Scientific American* article by Paul Thieme (1958:63–74) was a handsome, illustrated presentation, widely circulated, of the I-E Baltic homeland theory. His pupil Hanns-Peter Schmidt tells me that Thieme was never an enthusiast for the idea. Thieme's commission from *Scientific American* was simply to write up the standard Baltic homeland position.

Paul Friedrich's *PIE Trees* (1970) mooted the Baltic homeland debate by showing that the beech and salmon, etc. are as much at home on the slopes and in the streams of the northern Caucasus range as they are in the Baltic basin.

In the 1950s Marija Gimbutas updated Schrader's scheme, with somewhat sparse credit. In the mid 1950s she published her view that there was an I-E irruption into Europe ca. 2500 BC, but successive archeological finds revealed more waves of Indo-European migration. Gimbutas later posited three waves of the Kurgan peoples into their present homelands.<sup>6</sup> A redundant feature of waves is that you never get just one, two, or three.

Later Gimbutas focused her work on the pre-IE cultures of "Old Europe" into whose lands the Kurgan peoples had burst (Dexter & Bley-Jones 1997). Her Old Europe is not to be confused with Krahe's. In the lands around the east Mediterranean, Old Europeans, including Semites, vied with Indo-European Kurgan peoples and others. Northern bread-and-butter and beer were displaced by Mediterranean wine and olive oil (Hehn 1976[1870]). The twain met.

Long ago it was clear that Greek lexicon contained a goodly percentage of non-IE words. Meillet attributed loss of the I-E inflexions in Greek to bilingualism with the indigenous non-IE inhabitants, at least some of whom were Semites.

Otto Schrader (1883, 1906–1907) noted the absence of autochthonous I-E terms for ass and camel. But southern I-E languages have words for them, vocabulary that was unknown in the north until borrowed from Mediterranean I-E-ans. *No argumentum e silentio*, Schrader's positive argument is that Mediterranean Indo-Europeans acquired non-IE loanwords south of the Caucasus, to provide the terminology for unfamiliar domesticated animals. Renfrew's idea of an Anatolian I-E Homeland was demolished a century ago (Renfrew 1988; Jasanoff 1988). Then there's palm tree, elephant, tiger, etc. Mediterranean Indo-Europeans share their word for 'lion' with Semites. Saul Levin derives Latin *camelus* from the same source as *caballus*, source of the Romance words for horse. Now, *caballus* is not a synonym of *equus*, but translates into English as 'nag, plug, pack animal'. This is Saul

<sup>6</sup> This broad brush picture was really more complex. The lesson of Britain is illustrative. The Normans who took England descended from Frenchified Danes who dwelt around Dublin before hitting the beaches of Normandy, with many Bretons in the retinue in 1066. Before them came Vikings, Angles-Saxons-Jutes, Romans, the real Britons—the Welsh. With the advent of Angles, Saxons, etc., many of these Britons were off from Britain to Brittany, replacing Gaulish. How many different "waves", bands of Celts *et al.* landed in Britain in the Bronze Age?



Levin's approach. Adherents of the Nostratic model, it seems, would have to posit a proto-form for Hebrew *gimel* and Spanish *caballo*.

Now back to McGuire, to see just where Saul Levin's work fits in. I revert to McGuire's catch phrase style here:

- The entrance of peoples or bands speaking Indo-European dialects into the Oriental world in the early centuries of the second millennium B.C. and the beginning of a new epoch in Ancient History.
- The possible causes of the Indo-European migrations, the displacements of other peoples, the Hittite sack of Babylon, the Cassite raids and the establishment of Cassite rule in Lower Mesopotamia, Hurrite movements, profound disturbances in Syria and Palestine, the Hyksos' invasion and conquest of Egypt.
- The role of the Indo-European invaders in the introduction of the horse and the horse-drawn war chariot into the Near East.
- The foundation of Indo-European dynasties or states in Asia Minor and Upper Mesopotamia, Eastern Iran, and India in the second millennium B.C.
- The ephemeral character of many of these and the complete absorption of the Indo-European speakers into the earlier populations, the more or less thorough fusion of Indo-European and non-Indo-European elements in those centers or areas where Indo-European minorities maintained their identity and political dominance.
- The problem of Hittite in relation to common Indo-European and to the other Indo-European dialects and of the extent of Indo-European elements in Hittite culture.
- The first Indo-European migrations into the Greek and Italian peninsulas and the chronological and other problems connected with them; the Indo-Iranian group and the early Indo-European civilizations of India.

Indo-Europeans gained vast territories from 3000 to 2000 BC. They also lost ground, especially in Central Asia and in the Near and Middle East. Bronze Age archeology from the 1920s to the 1950s reflected destruction horizons and irruptions of new peoples. The stage for Levin's work was set by William Foxwell Albright:

[I]t seems increasingly probable that a great southward migration of Indo-Aryans and Horites (Hurrians) took place then. There is no trace of these racial elements in Palestine and southern Syria during the nineteenth or eighteenth centuries, yet by the fifteenth century Indo-Aryan and Horite princes and nobles were established almost everywhere. Some sort of mass migration of these peoples southward must have occurred meanwhile... Palestine had become a high road of trade between Africa and Asia. (1949: 85–86)

A half-century later, the picture is updated by Gernot Wilhelm (2000:1243–54):

- *Pre-1600 BC.* Ancestors of the historical Hurrians inhabited the mountainous regions of eastern Anatolia for centuries. Hurrians penetrated the agricultural regions of the lowlands.

- *ca 1550 BC.* Before texts are found in Hurrian language or Hurrian words in texts of other languages, the Mitanni are mentioned in the Egyptian tomb biography of Anemhemet. Inherited dynastic names of the kings of Mitanni are Indo-Aryan, though the language in general use was Hurrian.
- *1550–1500 BC.* Egypt, under the first kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty, expands into Mitanni territory after the reign of Queen Hatshepsut. The source for Mitanni language is in the letters to the pharaohs excavated at Tell-al-Amarna in the 1920s in Middle Egypt (Akhenaten). A Mitanni victory over Hittites is mentioned. A Hittite army is dispatched to re-conquer Mitanni.
- *ca. 1400 BC.* In Hurrian texts, proper names, Indo-Aryan names, are found.
- *1300 BC.* Texts include Mitanni Indo-Aryan words associated with horse breeding and chariot driving. The Mitanni dynasty retained Indo-Aryan throne names into the thirteenth century.
- *1200 BC ...* Documents of Egyptians, Hurrians and Hittites mentioning the Mitanni include archaic Indo-Aryan words for horse breeding and chariot driving, in addition to names of the gods Mitra, Varuna, and the Asvin divine twins.

Gordon Whittaker (1997ff.) has recently turned up stunning evidence of earlier I-E presence in Mesopotamia in Sumerian texts. Invited to the University of California, Los Angeles, he delivered a presentation: “Euphratic: An Indo-European Answer to the Sumerian Question?”

I will be presenting controversial new evidence bearing on the so-called Sumerian Problem, the question as to whether the Sumerians were the first to settle Southern Mesopotamia. Loanwords in the Sumerian language and the phonetic characteristics of the writing system point to a solution of this century-old problem. The language behind not only the sign values of the future cuneiform system but also the majority of identifiable non-Semitic loans in Sumerian is apparently a member of the Indo-European family, indeed the earliest known representative by over a millennium and a half. This was the language of the Euphrateans.

In the 1950s I had read that the IE word for cow was borrowed from Sumerian *gud* and that IE words for red and ore were borrowings of Sumerian *urud* ‘copper’. That was exciting. Whittaker (2001) shows the borrowing to be the other way around—from IE to Sumerian, via Euphratic. “IE \**gwou-s* (final [Sumerian] *d/r* < IE *s* is regular),” and:

The Sumerian language possesses loanwords indicating that an early Indo-European language, with affinities to west I-E languages [Celtic, Italic, Germanic] was spoken in south Mesopotamian in the 4th millennium B.C. (2001:15)

Whittaker describes a Sumerian logogram based on the image of a fish having a phonetic reading *peš*. This he compared with the familiar Latin *piscis* ‘fish’. A pictogram featuring a milk pitcher serves as a logogram for *ga* ‘milk’. Compare Greek *galakt* and Latin *lact-* ‘milk’.

As a phonetic sign it reads as the Sumerian modal prefix *ga-* 'let me'. A few more brief samples of Whittaker's readings:

- A phonetic sign read as *lik* is the sign for hound/wolf and point to kinship with the I-E word for 'wolf'.
- Sumerian 'ewe' is written in Early Sumerian at Ebla as *Ū-wi*. Compare I-E *\*h<sub>3</sub>owi-s* 'sheep'; Latin *ouis* 'sheep' and English *ewe*.
- Sumerian 'bird' is *bu* < I-E *\*h<sub>2</sub>aw-i-* [cf. Latin *avis*].

Whittaker's work contains many, many such important etymologies. Further, he says:

Of culture elements eventually reaching Mesopotamia from the Caucasus region, especially noteworthy is the lack with the Euphrates folk of ca. 4000 B.C. of the domesticated horse. This indicates that they had split off from proto-IE around just before 4000 B.C. In regard to the dog sign (as the related Sumerian loan word for 'bitch'), Euphrates people (as also the Sumerians), it seems, unlike all later Indo-Europeans, did not know the dog. This also speaks for the high antiquity of Euphratic. The biblical Hebrews had little to do with the dog and the horse.

The Semitic societies that Saul Levin works with are found higher up in the stratigraphy than Whittaker's Euphrateans. Northern Semites were in contact with peoples ancestral to Hellenic and Indo-Iranian, as in the periods covered by Albright or Wilhelm. The earliest known evidence for Indic language is not from India, but Mesopotamia—"between the Rivers" to the Greeks, Doab "Two Waters" to the Indians. Gernot Wilhelm (1995) anticipates that texts written in the Harappan script will be found to contain Indo-Aryan words.

Saul Levin's first big book, *The Indo-European and Semitic Languages* (1971), was reviewed by Joseph Malone (1973). For him Levin's work showed homologies, but Malone discounted them as statistical flukes, if without demonstration. Levin's second big book, *Semitic & Indo-European: The Principal Etymologies* (1995) got a comprehending review from Yaron Matras (1999):

The more scholars know about linguistic history, the more they appear to be challenged by, and so attracted to the mysteries of prehistorical linguistics. Saul Levin is a recognized authority on several of the ancient languages of western Eurasia, and his present study continues his work on the relations between the Indo-European and Semitic languages.

Saul Levin doesn't conceal that his phonetic correspondences are less tidy than the neat tabulations of Grimm and Verner and Grassmann. Matras puts it so: "With the origin of suspected cognates going so far back in time, it would be unfair to expect a neatly formed series of sound shifts, but an inventory of the recurring patterns would have been helpful."

Africanists at the 31CHL in Hamburg, however, said they would be delighted to get results as good as Levin's. Yet, even in Europe, in shallow time depths, things can be messy. Compare:

- *mlečanski* 'Venetian' (Serbian)
- veneziano* (Italian)
- *albanese* (Italian)
- Arnaut* (noun, Serbian, Turkish)
- Αρβανίτες* (noun plural, Greek)
- *veringer* 'Varangians' (Norse)
- Varyagi* (Old Russian)
- warank* (Arabic)
- *němci* (Old Russian)
- namdzh-in* (Arabic, plural)
- nemidzoi ~ nemintzi* (Greek, plural)
- *patlidžan* (Serbian, Armenian...)
- patlican* (Turkish)
- melanzana* (Italian)
- aubergine* (French)
- berenjena* (Spanish)
- (al) ba'dingian* (Arabic)
- vatīn-gana* (Sanskrit '[the plant that] cures the wind' —fartless, unlike other legumes.

Wouldn't Nostraticists have to derive these words from their proto-language after loading everything into the hopper, ignoring flux and reflux of peoples, languages, and cultures? A similar mechanist procedure vitiates "Generative Phonology" (Maher 1969).<sup>7</sup>

Nostratic is written up as science in the popular press, even though Indo-Europeanists have shown that the Nostraticists haven't done their homework, for example Eric P. Hamp (in Salmons & Joseph 1998). Saul Levin, too, finds that Nostratic fails the test.<sup>8</sup> It's the approach dubbed by V. G. Childe (1958) as "postage stamp archaeology," picking out shredded bits and pieces and throwing out the envelope and enclosed letter.

It was not isolated words that were transferred in the exchanges, stock-raising and trading. Levin goes well beyond Pott's recognition of the cognate words for bull in Semitic and Indo-European. Levin has found whole-phrase cognates, not single words, for 'horn(s) of the bull':

<sup>7</sup> In a talk to the Ethno-Linguistic Seminar at Indiana University in 1963 or 1964, Fred Householder told us that he had picked up a pre-print copy of something new in Cambridge MA: "Chomsky and Halle are writing a book on the pronunciation of Greek and Latin words in English." It appeared in 1968 with impressive typography, juvenile linguistic ideas, and inept title as *The Sound Pattern of English*.

<sup>8</sup> Nostratic postulations about the IE 'dog' and the source of Germanic "wife" are untenable. Osthoff (1901) solved the dog problem over a hundred years ago.

- Arabic     *qarnu šawrī*
- Latin     *cornū taurī*
- Greek     *kéras taúrou*
- Hebrew   *qéren šowr.*

On these words Whittaker (1997) and Levin propose opposite directions of borrowing between I-E to Semitic. Either way, the contact is between Semites and Indo-Europeans, and Nostratic is repudiated by both.

Vittore Pisani (1973) wrote a respectful review of *The Indo-European and Semitic Languages: An Exploration of Structural Similarities Related to Accent, Chiefly in Greek, Sanskrit, and Hebrew* (1971). Pisani took note of the compelling geography, especially the little matter of the Caucasus range, rich in minerals. At first it seems a barrier between Hamito-Semitic peoples to the south and Indo-European to the north, and beyond to Finno-Ugric, Turkic, Altaic, and more. Italians are prepared for this by the presence of the Alps, which are not only barrier but also bridge between north and south. In clear weather, from Verona and Venice, snow-capped peaks loom gigantic. Here runs one of the Amber Roads, from the Baltic up Oder and Vistula, over to the Inn, up again over the Brenner Pass, then down Adige and Pò to the Adriatic and Mediterranean, to the Near East—to Palestine and Egypt. Baltic amber is known in Egypt. Egyptian faïence beads are found in Scandinavian graves. The trading and bargaining and transport required polyglot bargaining.

To the west, Morocco and Gibraltar form the Pillars of Hercules, holding up the sky, the gate to Atlas's ocean. Italian maps after Columbus revealed the coasts of America and Africa/Europe facing each other like the pieces of a big jigsaw puzzle. Though cartographers had not seldom theorized about the fit of the coasts, geology courses when I was an undergraduate dismissed it all as a joke of nature.<sup>9</sup> The pattern was seldom missed by grade schoolers.<sup>10</sup> Saul Levin's work and fate can well be compared to Alfred Wegener's. When astronomer-turned-meteorologist Wegener proposed to explain the congruence of continental profiles as the result of continents "drifting" over the earth's crust, he was dismissed as not a proper geologist, just a meteorologist. Astronomers, weathermen and geologists, however, share the map room, where atmosphere meets lithosphere.

Levin's sigla are a logical extension of, and vast improvement on, Schleicher's asterisk for reconstructions (Levin 2002:vii):

- methodically reconstructed for a prehistoric or other unattested stage
- √ definitely known from actual texts or from current usage
- † doubtless available for use in the language, but apparently—through mere accident—unattested in the corpus
- § probably to be found somewhere in the corpus, but not accessible to me
- ? merely hypothetical; with no standing as evidence for comparative grammar

<sup>9</sup> At the time of the Darwin Centenary in 1959 good scholars were deriding Catastrophism in the extinction of species. Now we have the explanation involving asteroid impact.

<sup>10</sup> In my school days, we made multi-colored maps of the continents by applying on the sketch of the respective land masses a paste of flower, salt and water, tinted with water-color inks.

- ?? cited by me for the sole purpose of discreditation.

Levin's practice of citing data in original scripts has been tarred as "showing off." Lord help the critics if Saul were dealing with Georgian, Armenian, Thai, Hindi, Chinese, Korean, or Japanese. Scholars of Hebrew and Irish would defend Levin's practice: "Anyone who is familiar with Irish in the Irish character will find not only difficulty but annoyance in reading it in Roman type. The language loses much of its individuality, just as Greek does in Roman type" (Lynam 1969[1924]). An example from Spanish would not be exotic: the spelling *canyon* may help the gringo approximate Spanish sounds, but obliterates the phonological principle that Spanish distinguishes palatalized and non-palatalized consonants, as in *ano* and *año*. Matras (1999) lets himself be bothered only by inadequate computer fonts. Otherwise, he gives high marks for Levin's practice: "both author and publisher deserve special recognition for an impressive display of fonts and diacritics."<sup>11</sup>

Sapir taught that it is possible to prove two languages are related, but impossible to prove that any two languages are unrelated (1921, ch. 9).<sup>12</sup> Gyula Décsy (1991) has made the hard-to-disprove point, may Karl Popper rest in peace, that all languages are related, some closer, some more distantly. Saul Levin doesn't oppose the idea of an Afro-Asiatic family tree but finds there's little if any evidence for it. His considered, not assumed, position is that features attributed to a proto-AA language are diffusions across landscapes populated by many "unrelated" peoples, if any human societies at all are unrelated to each other.

If you have attended any of Saul Levin's talks you will know he answers questions and challenges eruditely and calmly, never paying back in kind the scurrility of some of the attacks on him. Levin's books have been both praised and damned. Sidwell (1997) likens Levin's method to the yokel etymology linking Amerind *Potomac* and Greek *potamós* as cognates.<sup>13</sup> The yokel here is not Saul Levin.

Levin's harshest critics opine that he is isolated. Trask wrote on Linguist List: "A linguist called Saul Levin has published at least two books arguing for a link between Semitic and Indo-European, but he hasn't convinced anybody."

Robert Hetzron argued: "What Levin seems not to know is that Hebrew, which had cases, always generalized the oblique cases (just like the Romance languages with the Latin accusative" (1977). I heard this shaggy dogma in Comparative-Historical Linguistics 101 in 1955. In 1972 I asked seasoned old Henry Kahane about his position on the matter. He said

<sup>11</sup> In the 1950s and '60s I relished the transliterations of the name of one *Nikita Sergeievich ~ Hukuma Cepreebuv ... Khrushchev~Χρουντςζεβ~Chruszczew~Chrouchtchev~Chruschtschew*, all monstrosities in comparison with *Хрущёв*.

<sup>12</sup> "We can only say, with reasonable certainty, that such and such languages are descended from a common source, but we cannot say that such and such other languages are not genetically related. All we can do is to say that the evidence for relationship is not cumulative enough to make the inference of common origin absolutely necessary."

<sup>13</sup> Bloomfield's *Potomac/potamos* bit was a joke. The American river in any case took its name from some market place on that stream, while Greek *potamós*, any Hellenist would know, was in origin a motivated word, descriptive of a cascading torrent, expectable in mountainous Greece. Morphologically it represents a suffixation of \**pet-* ~ *pot-* ~ *pt-* 'fall'.

it was good enough for him and seemed to work well enough for the history of Greek. This is an example of what Tenney Frank (quoted in McGuire's lectures) called the "fallacy of the shortcut to knowledge." Saves homework—and thinking.

"Sometimes [Levin] even chooses a case form from the declension because this seems to better serve his purpose" (Gonzalo Rubio 1998:656–57). The trouble with Rubio's position is that this is precisely what happens in all language contact:

"O Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool? I am very tired of swimming about here, O Mouse!" Alice thought this must be the right way of speaking to a mouse: she had never done such a thing before, but she remembered having seen in her brother's Latin Grammar, "A mouse—of a mouse—to a mouse—a mouse—O mouse!" ([Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*)

Alice is backed up by Nanook of the North. English borrowed Eskimo words *igloo* (singular), *mukluk* (dual), and (plural) *Inuit*. Eskimos will grin at the Anglo's unwitting use of their number suffixes. We pluralize already dual *mukluk* as *mukluks*. Had the invaders picked up the word for house where two or more of them happened to be found together, English might now have \**iglook* or \**iglout*. And if the intrepid explorers had encountered a lot of Eskimo products and structures, we might have *muklut* and *iglut*. Had they encountered a solitary Eskimo, I suppose we'd say *Inoo*.

Nanook demolishes the "theory" enunciated by Rüdiger Schmitt prescribing that words are [always?] adopted in a definite "Leitform". He and Hetzron and Rubio haven't shown us how they ascertain this form. Schmitt insists that borrowing between inflexional languages in contact cannot involve words in just any old case form (1996:203–5).

The facts don't cooperate. For example scores of toponyms, e.g., *München*, *Bayern*, *Preussen*, *Hessen*, *Göttingen*, *Tübingen*, etc. are originally locational forms ("instrumental case").<sup>14</sup> Schmitt upbraids Levin also for allegedly implying (where?) that loanword selection is based on protagonists' knowledge of whole inflexional paradigms. Lewis Carroll's Alice shows Schmitt's idea to be a joke.

Regarding reviews, I quote again Martin R. P. McGuire:

Unfortunately... the quality of book reviews in most scholarly journals is very uneven. Many reviews are superficial, and, what is worse, many show an inexcusable

<sup>14</sup> Hundreds of Slavic place names in Austria are old Slovene locative case forms in *-jah*, e.g. *Ferlach* < *borovljah* 'in/among people of the fir wood'. In Italy, many city names are from Latin locational forms (nominally genitive or ablative case): *Pozzuoli* < *Puteolis*, *Pompeii* < *Pompeiiis*, *Napoli* < *Nea-Poli*, *Udine* < *Udinae* (nominative *Udina*), *Firenze* < *Florentiae* (nominative *Florentia*). Polish and Czech selected for the name of countries what was once only the accusative case of the names of their inhabitants, answering "whither?" : *Włochy*, *Vlchy*, as against "Italians" *Włosi*, *Vlasi*, old nominatives/agentives. More of the same: in Ireland the English forms *Erin* and *Tara* reveal that the Sassanach picked these up in locational syntagma, not the nominative dictionary form.



lack of judgment and ordinary common sense in balancing the good and the bad in the final verdict. (McGuire 1955:197)

A certain sclerosis in establishment linguistics is reflected in the lack of mention of Saul Levin's work in e.g. Mallory and Adams' *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Studies* (1997). EIEC also omits Sadowszky. EIEC was published at around the same time as Whittaker's work began to appear.

I-E scholars often ignore Indo-European affinities with non I-E languages. The mindset has been called "Indo-Euro-Centrism" by Décsy (1991):

In 1960 I met the famous Polish linguist Kuryłowicz... in a scholarly discussion meeting. He addressed us about complicated internal problems of the Indo-European phonology. I made some remarks on his views, quoting data from the Uralic languages. Before dealing with my remarks he asked somewhat indignantly and without any trace of humor: "Uralic languages? What are they?" Apparently: *Extra Indo-Europam non est vita, si est vita, non est ita...*

Another Uralic neighbor is Anttila:

I was bothered by the indeterminacy about the northern boundary of (Proto) Indo-European in the standard literature, and... there is much further knowledge for it, both material and chronological. It is the Indo-European side that refuses to peek through the fence, and then some of the Finno-Ugrists also go with them, because the former are supposed to know their Indo-European better... There is an incredibly rich array of Indo-European loans of all ages and of various geographic distributions in Uralic, and with stringent philology they can be used for productive historical inferences... The best results come... combining archaeology and loanword studies... (2000:513–14)

On the eastern front, I-E-speaking peoples reached what later became western Han China. There I-E loanwords (wheel, hub, belt) are known. The Silk Road is older than Marco Polo. Blue-eyed Tarim mummies are buried on the Altai, where Tokharian was once spoken, while today the landscape is home to phenotypically East Asian peoples, who may have intermarried with the Europoids that preceded them there (Barber 1999, Mallory & Mair 2000).

The IE homeland debate is not just about prehistory. In our day feminist and Wiccan groups have eagerly adopted Gimbutas's late views. Elst (1999), Erdosy (1995) and Frawley (1994) contend about the Indo-Aryan conquest of India. Nationalist Hindus, Greeks and Serbs sometimes see the Indo-European theory as resurgent imperialism by British and German scholarship.<sup>15</sup>

Gyarmathy clarified the spread of Ob-Ugric peoples from the watershed of the Ob river south and west to the Black Sea shores, where they and Turkic peoples lived together

<sup>15</sup> Belgrade Byzantologist Radivoje Radić (2002) lampoons the "Romantics" in his book "The Serbs Before and After Adam".



long before the Magyar Landnahme in Pannonia. Other Ob-Ugrians went north. Otto Sadoszsky (1984, 1996, 2002) has collected massive evidence of Ob-Ugric peoples migrating the Ob downstream to the shores of the Arctic Ocean, hunting the salmon, thence over the Bering Straits and planting the language family known now as Penutian along the Pacific coast of North America. They stopped at Monterey (California) because the salmon do not run farther south than that. Voguls still live in the old homeland in the Ob basin.

When I first encountered Sadoszsky's work, at the Hamburg 31CHL conference, my disposition—from indoctrination—was skeptical. But when I sat down in his study and he showed me data from American Indian languages of the Pacific coast, I was surprised to find I could supply Hungarian cognates myself. One dismissive reviewer holds that Sadoszsky "does not have 30,000 cognates; it's only 10,000." (Raimo Anttila p.c.)

On Ob-Ugrians in California, Sadoszsky quotes S.A. Barrett (University of California, Berkeley); he recorded salient features of a ceremony, from May 5 to May 8, 1906, in the wake of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

A few days after the [San Francisco] earthquake, the great shaman, Salvador, suddenly went into a trance, and on his awakening announced that he had journeyed to *bole Wilak*, 'ghost world'...The earthquake was felt so strongly by the Cortina Valley Indians, that during the ceremony it was the main topic of conversation. Almost all saw the immense column of smoke rising toward the sky. Some could even discern at night the huge flames consuming the city.

In the mind of the Patwin Indians, the world was near an end. All that they felt and saw was the part of the final cataclysm, fitting so well into their religious philosophy. The Patwin believe that the world (*wilak*) had been created in four phases and stretched out four times, in order to accommodate all the people. In case the earth becomes overpopulated, a fifth expansion will be necessary, but that will bring down the mountains and destroy this world, this *wilak*.

Sadoszsky:

Any speaker of Hungarian is struck by the similarity of this word, *wilak*, to Hungarian, *világ*, 'world'; the 'end of the world' in Hungarian is *világ vége*; and 'spirit world' = *szellem világ*.

The first and natural reaction is that it must be a fortuitous coincidence. On closer inspection, however, the genetic relationship between the two words becomes quite apparent. ... Hungarian *világ* ... means 'light, world, season, blooming'; and [is] related to *villám* 'lightning', and perhaps to *virúl* 'to bloom' and *virág* 'flower', since we have a *világ* form (in [Hungarian] dialects) for 'flower'. All these words have close cognates in Patwin and Miwokan and other Penutian languages, which clearly indicates a genetic relationship between Hungarian *világ* and Patwin *wilak*.

Finally, back to Hamburg 1977. Saul Levin's paper on contact of Indo-Europeans and Semites was enthusiastically received by the 3ICHL audience. As the time allotted for questions ran out, several of us gathered round Saul after the plenum to continue discussion. One scholar state unequivocally evaluated Saul Levin's comparative studies on the present state of Semitic and Indo-European studies as on a par with the work of Bopp and Rask and Grimm for Indo-European in the 1830s. That verdict on Saul Levin's legacy was spoken by Yakov Malkiel.



## REFERENCES

- ALBRIGHT, WILLIAM FOXWELL. 1949. *The archeology of Palestine: From the Stone Age to Christianity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- ANTTILA, RAIMO. 2000. The Indo-European and Balto-Finnic interface: Time against the ice. In *Time depth in historical linguistics*, vol. 2., ed. Colin Renfrew, April McMahon, & Larry Trask, 481–528. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BARBER, ELIZABETH WAYLAND. 1999. *The mummies of Ürümchi*. New York: Norton.
- BROWN, JOHN PAIRMAN. 1997. Linguistic publications of Saul Levin. *General linguistics* 35:25–50.
- & SAUL LEVIN. 1986. The ethnic paradigm as a pattern for nominal forms in Greek and Hebrew. *General linguistics* 26:71–105.
- BUCK, CARL DARLING. 1987[1949]. *A dictionary of selected synonyms in the principal Indo-European languages*. Chicago IL: Chicago University Press.
- CHILDE, V. Gordon. 1958. *Prehistory of European society*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- CROSSLAND R. A. 1957. Indo-European origins: The linguistic evidence. *Past and Present* 12(1):16–46.
- DÉCSY, GYULA. 1991. *The Indo-European proto-language: A computational reconstruction*, ed. Gyula Décsy, ??–??. Bloomington IN: Eurolingua.
- DEXTER, MIRIAM ROBBINS & KARLENE JONES-BLEY, eds. 1997. *The Kurgan culture and the Indo-Europeanization of Europe: Selected articles from 1952 to 1993 by M. Gimbutas*. Washington DC: Institute for the Study of Man.
- ELST, KOENRAAD. 1999. *Update on the Aryan invasion debate*. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan.
- ERDOSY, GEORGE, ed. 1995. *The Indo-Aryans of ancient south Asia: Language, material culture, and ethnicity*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- FRAWLEY, DAVID. 1994. *The myth of the Aryan invasion of India*. New Delhi: Voice of India.
- FRIEDRICH, PAUL. 1970. *PIE trees: The arboreal system of a prehistoric people*. Chicago IL: Chicago University Press.
- GIMBUTAS, MARIJA. 1985. Primary and secondary homeland of the Indo-Europeans. *Journal of Indo-European studies* 13:185–202.

- GAMKRELIDZE, THOMAS V. & VJACESLAV V. IVANOV. 1985a. The migration of the tribes speaking the Indo-European dialects from their original homeland in the Near East to their historical habitations in Eurasia. *Journal of Indo-European studies* 13:49–91.
- & ———. 1985b. The problem of the original homeland of the Indo-European languages. *Journal of Indo-European studies* 13:176–84.
- GURNEY, OLIVER ROBERT. 1951. *The Hittites*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- HEHN, VICTOR. 1976[1870]. *Cultivated plants and domesticated animals in their migration from Asia to Europe*, trans. James P. Mallory. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- JASANOFF, JAY. 1988. Review of Renfrew, *Archaeology and language*. *Language* 64:800–2.
- JOOS, MARTIN. 1957. *Readings in linguistics*. Washington DC: American Council of Learned Societies.
- HETZRON, ROBERT. 1977. Review of Levin, *The Indo-European and Semitic languages*. *Journal of linguistics* 13:535–53.
- KAMMERZELL, FRANK, DÖRTE BORCHERS & STEFAN WENIGER. 2001. *Hieroglyphen, alphabete, schriftreformen*. Gebunden. Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- KAYE, ALAN S. 1999[1996]. Review of Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies*. *General Linguistics* 36:187.
- LEVIN, SAUL. 1964. *The Linear B decipherment controversy re-examined*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1971. *The Indo-European and Semitic languages: An exploration of structural similarities related to accent, chiefly in Greek, Sanskrit, and Hebrew*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1975. Greek occupational terms with Semitic counterparts. *LACUS forum* 1: 246–63.
- . 1982. Homo: Humus and the Semitic counterparts: The oldest culturally significant Etymology? In *Papers from the third international conference on historical linguistics, Hamburg, August 22–26 1977*, ed. J. Peter Maher, Allan R. Bomhard & E.F.K. Koerner, 207–16. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- . 1995. *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies, with observations on Afro-Asiatic*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- . 1999a. Reply to Paul Sidwell's review of *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies*. *Dhumbadji!* 5(1):64–69.
- . 1999b. What does cognate mean? In reply to Alan Kaye and other reviewers of *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies*. *General linguistics* 36:257–70.
- . 2002. *Semitic and Indo-European II. Comparative morphology, syntax and phonetics*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- . 2009 *Guide to the Bible*, rev. ed. Binghamton NY: Global Academic Press.
- LYNAM, E.W. 1969[1924]. *The Irish character in print, 1571–1923*. Introduction by Alf MacLochlainn. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- MCGUIRE, MARTIN R. P. 1955. *Introduction to classical scholarship: A syllabus and bibliographical guide*. Mimeograph. Washington DC: Catholic University of America

- MAHER, JOHN PETER. 1977[1969]. The paradox of creation and tradition in grammar: Sound pattern of a palimpsest. In Maher 1977.
- . 1973. \*H<sub>a</sub>ékmon: '(stone) axe' and 'sky' in I-E / battle-axe culture. In Maher 1977.
- . 1977. *Papers on language theory & history I*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- MALLORY, J. P. 1989. *The Indo-Europeans: Language, archaeology, and myth*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- & VICTOR H. Mair. 2000. *The Tarim mummies: Ancient China and the mystery of the earliest peoples from the west*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- & DOUGLAS Q. Adams. 1997. *Encyclopedia of Indo-European culture*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn.
- MALONE, JOSEPH. 1973. Review of Levin, *The Indo-European and Semitic languages: An exploration of structural similarities related to accent, chiefly in Greek, Sanskrit, and Hebrew*. *Language* 49:204–9.
- MATRAS, YARON. 1999. Review of Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies*. *Journal of Semitic studies* 44(1):105–7.
- OSTHOFF, HERMANN. 1901. Hund und Vieh im Indogermanischen. *Etymologica Parerga. Erster Teil*. Leipzig: S. Hirzel.
- PISANI, VITTORE. 1973. Parentela fra le grandi famiglie linguistiche. *Paideia* 26:324–26.
- RADIĆ, RADIVOJE. 2002. *Srbi pre Adama i posle Njega*. Belgrade: Stubovi Kulture.
- RENFREW, A. COLIN. 1988. *Archaeology and language: The puzzle of Indo-European origins*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- RUBIO, GONZALO. 1998. Review of Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies*. *Language* 74:656–657.
- SADOVSZKY, OTTO. 1984. The discovery of California: Breaking the silence of the Siberia-to-America migrators. *The Californian*, November–December.
- . 1996. The discovery of California: A Cal-Ugrian comparative study. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó; Los Angeles: International Society for Trans-Oceanic Research.
- . 2002. The Ob-Ugrian/Cal-Ugrian connection: Rediscovering the discovery of California. *Journal of American Indian culture and research* 26(4):113–20.
- SALMONS, JOSEPH C. & BRIAN D. JOSEPH, eds. 1998. *Nostratic: Sifting the evidence*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- EDWARD SAPIR. 1921. *Language: An introduction to the study of speech*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- . 1936. Internal linguistic evidence suggestive of the northern origin of the Navaho. *American anthropologist* 38:224–35.
- . 1949. *Selected writings of Edward Sapir in language, culture, and personality*, ed. David G. Mandelbaum. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- SASSON, JACK. M., eds. 2000. *Civilizations of the Near East*, vol 2. New York: Hendrickson.
- SCHMITT, RÜDIGER. 1996. Review of Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies*. *Kratylos* 41:201–5

- SCHRADER, OTTO. 1907[1883]. *Spachvergleichung und Urgeschichte: Linguistisch-historische Beiträge zur Erforschung des indogermanischen Altertums*, 3rd ed. Jena: Hermann Costenoble.
- . 1890. *Prehistoric antiquities of the Aryan peoples: A manual of comparative philology and the earliest culture, being the 'Spachvergleichung und Urgeschichte' of Dr. O. Schrader*, 2nd ed., transl. Frank Byron Jevons. London: Griffin & Co.
- SIDWELL, PAUL. 1997. Review of Levin, *Semitic and Indo-European: The principal etymologies*. *Dhumbadji!* 3(2):131–35.
- SZEMERÉNYI, OSWALD. 1973. Review of Levin, *The Indo-European and Semitic languages: An exploration of structural similarities related to accent*. *General linguistics* 13:101–9.
- THIEME, PAUL. 1958. The Indo-European language. *Scientific American*, October:63–74.
- WHITTAKER, GORDON. 1997. Spuren einer frühindoeuropäischer Sprache im Schriftsystem Mesopotamiens. *Spektrum* 2.
- . 1998. Traces of an early Indo-European language in southern Mesopotamia. *Göttinger Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft* 1:111–147.
- . 2001. The dawn of writing and phoneticism. In *Hieroglyphen, Alphabete, Schriftreformen. Studien zur Multiliteralismus. Schriftwechsel und Orthographieneuregelungen*, ed. D. Borchers *et al.*, 11–50. Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie.
- . 2002. Linguistic anthropology and the study of Emesal as (a) women's language. In *Sex and gender in the ancient Near East*, vol. 2, ed. S. Parpola & R. M. Whiting, 633–644. Helsinki: University of Helsinki.
- . 2004/5. Some Euphratic adjectives. *Göttinger Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft* 10/11:119–47.
- . 2005. The Sumerian question: Reviewing the issues. In *Ethnicity in ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. W. van Soldt, 409–29. Leiden: Netherlands Institute for the Near East.
- WILHELM GERNOT. 2000. The kingdom of Mitanni in second millennium Upper Mesopotamia. In *Civilizations of the Near East*, vol. 2, ed. Jack M. Sasson, J. Baines, G.M. Beckman, & K.S. Rubinson, 1243–54. New York: Charles Scribner.





## DES RÉACTIONS AU COMPLIMENT EN FRANÇAIS CAMEROUNAIS: ESQUISSE D'UNE TYPOLOGIE

BERNARD MULO FARENKIA  
*Cape Breton University, Canada*

DE NOMBREUX TRAVAUX SE SONT DÉJÀ PENCHÉS sur le compliment et les réponses au compliment dans plusieurs langues et cultures<sup>1</sup>. Le contexte africain francophone en général semble n'avoir pas assez retenu l'attention des chercheurs. Le présent travail se veut une contribution aux recherches antérieures et se propose une présentation des types de réponses au compliment en milieu camerounais francophone.

Complimenter un interlocuteur, écrit Zihong Pu (2003:169), « c'est le louer et mettre en valeur ses qualités personnelles ». Le compliment constitue pour ainsi dire un discours laudatif en faveur d'une personne dont le comportement, les possessions, les qualités personnelles, etc. sont jugés positifs. Le compliment valorise la face (positive) de l'autre (Brown & Levinson 1987). Pour Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005a, 2005b), le compliment est un « cadeau verbal », qui peut, dans certains cas aussi violer le territoire de l'autre et le mettre mal à l'aise (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005b:77). Par ailleurs, le compliment place son bénéficiaire dans une situation de *double contrainte*, c'est-à-dire dans l'obligation de concilier deux principes conversationnels divergents, notamment (i) *accepter le cadeau afin de valoriser la face positive du complimenteur* ; (ii) *se montrer modeste en minimisant l'évaluation positive*.

Il est alors important de savoir comment les Camerounais réagissent au compliment et s'ils perçoivent le compliment essentiellement comme « cadeau ». Mais avant cela, une brève revue de quelques résultats des travaux antérieurs est nécessaire.

1. ETAT DES LIEUX. Le travail inaugural dans ce domaine est celui de Pomerantz (1978) qui, se basant sur un corpus Américain, a été la première à soulever le problème de la double contrainte (accepter le compliment et se montrer modeste) en corrélation avec le compliment. Cette problématique a donné lieu à une abondante littérature, avec une forte tendance à l'approche comparative. Les travaux existants portent majoritairement sur les cultures européennes, américaines et asiatiques et sur plus de quinze langues. Golato (2005:213) énumère douze langues. A cela, il faut ajouter l'arabe<sup>2</sup>, le grec<sup>3</sup>, le turc<sup>4</sup>, le thaï<sup>5</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> Voir "Speech Acts Bibliography: Compliments / Responses". <http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/bibliography/compliments.html>. (Consulté le 15 mai 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Nelson, El-Bakary & Al-Batal (1993); Al Falasi (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Sifianou (2001).

<sup>4</sup> Ruhi & Doğan (2001); Ruhi (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Gajaseni (1994); Cedar (2006).

et le français camerounais<sup>6</sup>. Ces travaux révèlent la forte influence des valeurs culturelles sur le choix, la fréquence et l'interprétation des types de réponses.

Ainsi, les travaux de R. Chen (1993), S. E. Chen (2003), Pu (2003), Daikuhara, (1986), Gajasemi (1994), Cedar (2006) etc. montrent que les réactions au compliment dans les cultures asiatiques (Chine, Japon, Thaïlande, etc.) sont marquées par l'influence de la modestie. Les interactions sont donc caractérisées par l'idée que le compliment embarrasse. L'accepter directement ou explicitement, constitue une atteinte au principe de modestie et une menace pour la face de l'interlocuteur et celle de la collectivité. D'où le recours aux stratégies qui consistent à éviter toute réaction qui s'apparente à l'auto-flatterie (rejet des compliments et autodénigrement. Parlant des Chinois, Pu (2003:180) relève que

...la modestie est une vertu fondamentale. Quant [sic] l'allocutaire reçoit un compliment, il doit se montrer modeste et exprimer sa reconnaissance envers son interlocuteur. Accepter le compliment sans modestie serait plutôt une mauvaise manière<sup>7</sup>.

Les travaux de Daikuhara (1986) et Barnlund & Araki (1985) attestent de la forte tendance chez les Japonais à l'évitement systématique des réponses qui portent atteinte à la loi de la modestie. L'évitement se manifeste alors par le rejet du compliment, le sourire ou le silence. Gajasemi (1994) et Cedar (2006) observent aussi chez les Thaï l'évitement récurrent des réponses positives au compliment. La stratégie mise en jeu consiste alors à rejeter l'évaluation positive, à sourire ou à ignorer simplement le compliment<sup>8</sup>. Les réactions dans les cultures arabes se singularisent par la fréquence du renvoi du compliment au complimenteur et surtout l'offre de l'objet du compliment au partenaire d'interaction (voir Nelson, Al-Batal, & Echols 1996; Al Falasi 2007; entre autres). Les travaux de Pomerantz (1978), Wolfson (1989), etc. permettent de constater que les Américains contournent le problème de la *double contrainte* en minimisant l'évaluation positive. Cette stratégie se manifeste de la manière suivante : 1) faire ressortir une caractéristique négative de l'objet du compliment; 2) adoucir la force illocutoire de l'énoncé laudatif, sans toutefois se montrer désagréable avec le complimenteur; 3) éviter toute forme d'éloge de soi. Il faut relever toutefois – comme l'a fait R. Chen (1993) – que les types de réponses employés par les Américains reposent sur la maxime de l'entente. C'est pourquoi on note une forte fréquence des remerciements. Les analyses menées par Weil (1983), Wieland (1995) et surtout Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1987, 2005b), etc. sur l'espace culturel français montrent que les Français adoptent de plus en plus la « façon anglo-saxonne, qui est de remercier » (Weil 1983:229). Cette situation semble rompre avec ce que pensent les adeptes du savoir-vivre, pour qui « il est

<sup>6</sup> Mulo Farenkia (2004, 2005, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Pour ce qui est des types de réponses en contexte chinois, les chercheurs proposent des typologies variées. On y note, néanmoins, la prépondérance des réactions négatives. Pu (2003:180-183) a identifié les catégories suivantes : Désaccord direct à l'assertion; Désaccord indirect à l'assertion; Acceptation totale du cadeau; Acceptation partielle; Déplacement du compliment; Renvoi du compliment; Demande de confirmation. Voir aussi S. E. Chen (2003).

<sup>8</sup> Pour les types de réponses chez les Thaï, Gajaseni (1994:6) identifie 13 stratégies regroupées dans les trois grandes catégories.



de bon ton de paraître refuser un compliment, comme si on ne le mériterait pas vraiment » (ibid.:230)<sup>9</sup>. Les enquêtes de Wieland (1995:809) confirment l'observation que les Français ont du mal à accepter d'être complimentés. Et cette attitude serait liée à l'esprit sceptique des Français. Mais il faut nuancer les propos ci-dessus en relevant, comme le fait Traverso (1996), que « dans les conversations familières, la possibilité d'acceptation semble légèrement plus large que dans d'autres situations. Pourtant, l'enchaînement le plus fréquent comprend toujours une minimisation » (ibid. 109-110)<sup>10</sup>.

2. LES LIMITES DES TRAVAUX ANTÉRIEURS. La pléthore des typologies de réponses au compliment n'a pas que des avantages pour les travaux ultérieurs. De nombreux inconvénients pour l'analyse d'un corpus francophone sont à relever. D'une part, la majorité des travaux sont rédigés en anglais ou portent sur des espaces anglo-saxons. Et les différentes recherches s'inspirent religieusement des catégories et terminologies présentées dans les travaux antérieurs qui portent aussi majoritairement sur l'anglais. D'autre part, les typologies proposées sont nombreuses et variées, les critères de classification variant d'un auteur à un autre. L'analyse d'un corpus francophone se trouve ainsi confrontée à un problème d'adaptation ou de création terminologique, puisqu'il est pratiquement impossible de partir d'une taxonomie anglo-saxonne. Par ailleurs, les variations terminologiques et taxonomiques prêtent à confusion. L'*accord* [*agreement*], par exemple, est présenté par certains chercheurs (Pomerantz, 1978 ; Holmes, 1986, 1988, etc.) comme une stratégie appartenant à la super-stratégie *acceptation du compliment* [*acceptance*]; d'autres, comme Zhihong Pu (2003), la traitent comme une stratégie à part entière. En outre, la distinction entre l'*accord* [*agreement*] et le *remerciement* [*appreciation (token)*] n'est pas toujours abordée. Puisque ce travail constitue la première étape d'une recherche plus vaste, nous nous contenterons de présenter des types de réponses déjà identifiés sans nous attarder sur des questions terminologiques et classificatoires.

### 3. COMMENT LES CAMEROUNAIS RÉPONDENT AU COMPLIMENT

3.1. LE CONTEXTE SOCIOLINGUISTIQUE. La communication au Cameroun se déroule dans un espace marqué par une hétérogénéité sociolinguistique, socioculturelle et ethnique remarquable surtout à travers les modes de vie et le fait que les langues officielles, l'anglais et le français, sont constamment en contact avec plus de 248 langues autochtones, le *pidgin English*, une langue véhiculaire et un parler hybride, le *camfranglais*<sup>11</sup>. Dans ces conditions, les Camerounais se voient « contraints » à s'approprier les langues officielles dominantes et à les adapter à leurs cultures locales, dans le but de les rendre fonctionnelles pour les interactions quotidiennes (Fosso 1999). Cela se manifeste par l'inventivité néologique sous toutes les formes possibles. De cette cohabitation ou ce conflit linguistique naissent plusieurs variétés de français (français standard, français populaire, etc.). Les pratiques lin-

<sup>9</sup> A cela s'ajoute le fait qu'on y « remercie parfois indirectement, en disant : « Vous êtes gentil de dire ça, vous êtes trop aimable » » (Weil 1983:230).

<sup>10</sup> Voir Traverso (1996:97-103) qui présente une typologie complètement différente.

<sup>11</sup> Pour plus de détails voir Mendo Ze (1999), Biloa (2003), entre autres.

guistiques, comme les réponses au compliment, se présentent dès lors comme un terrain d'expérimentation de ces variétés linguistiques.

**3.2. CORPUS ET TECHNIQUE DE COLLECTE DES DONNÉES.** Le corpus d'analyse est constitué de 4357 réponses au compliment obtenues à partir d'un questionnaire directif que nous avons élaboré et distribué à une centaine d'étudiants (118) francophones de l'Université de Yaoundé 1, de 2002 à 2003. Ces données ont été complétées par quelques entrevues ethnographiques et des notes de terrain relatives aux situations que nous avons personnellement vécues en tant qu'acteur ou dont nous avons juste été témoin. La collecte des données s'est déroulée essentiellement à Yaoundé, la capitale politique du Cameroun<sup>12</sup>.

**4. RÉSULTATS.** Nous avons constaté que les locuteurs camerounais emploient aussi bien des énoncés simples que des stratégies discursives complexes pour répondre aux compliments. Les stratégies simples sont constituées d'un énoncé relativement court présentant une seule valeur illocutoire. Dans les réponses complexes, par contre, le complimenté a recours à plusieurs énoncés pour transmettre plus d'une intention communicative (polysémie illocutoire). La fonction pragmatique majeure de la réponse est ainsi renforcée, atténuée ou contredite. Nous avons pu identifier les différentes catégories suivantes.

**4.1. LES RÉPONSES SIMPLES.** Nous avons identifié treize types de réponses simples représentées dans les exemples (1)–(27):

### **1. Acceptation du compliment**

#### **Expression de la gratitude :**

*A complimente B; B accepte le compliment et en remercie A.*

- (1) A : Ma puce, ton habillement me fait rêver.  
B : Merci beaucoup.

#### **Expression de la joie :**

*A complimente B; B accepte le compliment et exprime la joie que lui procure le compliment.*

- (2) A : Tu es vraiment bien habillé.  
B : Comme je suis content de l'entendre.

### **2. Accord / confirmation de l'évaluation positive**

*A complimente B; B indique qu'il/elle partage l'avis de A.*

- (3) A : Tu as vraiment bon goût. Ta maison est un paradis.  
B : Oui je le trouve aussi.

<sup>12</sup> Ce corpus nous a d'ailleurs permis de mener une réflexion plus large et comparative avec les compliments en milieu socioculturel germanique (Mulo Farenkia 2004; 2005).

*L'accord peut être accompagné d'un petit commentaire.*

- (4) A : Ta nouvelle coiffure te va à merveille.  
B : Je l'aime aussi, elle est à la mode.

### **3. Commentaire / Apport d'information**

*A complimente B ; B accepte implicitement le compliment et fait un commentaire sur l'objet du compliment (genèse, finalité, etc.).*

- (5) A : Tu n'es pas allé de main morte [Tu n'as pas lésiné sur les moyens]. C'est vraiment une belle maison.  
B : Merci. Je me suis énormément investi pour arriver à ce résultat.

*B fait part du principe ayant guidé son action*

- (6) A : Quelle habileté !  
B : Il faut toujours soigner son travail

### **4. Renvoi du compliment au complimenteur**

*A compliment B ; B renvoie le même compliment à A.*

- (7) A : Tu es élégant dans cette tenue.  
B : Merci. Mais toi aussi tu es frais [Toi aussi tu es bien habillé].

*A complimente B ; B complimente A sur un autre objet.*

- (8) A : Tu es fort élégant aujourd'hui. Est-ce une nouvelle tenue?  
B : Merci. Exactement. Tu es une très bonne observatrice.

### **5. Désaccord / Rejet du compliment**

*A complimente B ; B rejette le compliment de A (sous prétexte que A n'est pas sincère, plaisante, exagère, ment, etc.).*

- (9) A : Tu as seulement tué aujourd'hui [Tu es sublime aujourd'hui].  
B : Je n'aime pas les moqueries.

### **6. Auto-éloge / Renforcement du compliment reçu**

*A complimente B ; B renforce la portée de l'évaluation en rajoutant des traits positifs à l'objet du compliment.*

- (10) A : Mon amour, tu es encore charmant aujourd'hui comme le jour de notre mariage.  
B : Hélas ! Je suis toujours Okay.

- (11) A : Tu es bien habillé.  
B : Oui, chérie, c'est dans le sang.
- (12) A : Chéri, tu as accompli un travail fantastique.  
B : J'ai toujours été fort. / Je ne suis pas un dormeur.

### 7. Conseil / Encouragement

*A complimente B ; B prodigue des conseils à A ou encourage celui-ci/celle-ci à suivre son exemple.*

- (13) A : Que serions-nous sans toi, papa ?  
B : Eh bien, c'est un exemple à suivre.
- (14) A : Papa, j'admire ton jardin.  
B : J'espère que demain tu pourras faire comme moi.

### 8. Transfert à une tierce personne

*A complimente B ; B fait un petit commentaire dans lequel il renvoie le mérite à une tierce personne (en relevant la contribution de cette dernière à l'accomplissement de l'action/l'acquisition de l'objet du compliment).*

- (15) A : Gars, tu as été magnifique pendant le match.  
B : C'est grâce au travail technique de notre entraîneur.
- (16) A : Ta chambre est toujours bien rangée.  
B : J'essaye d'appliquer ce que me dit ma mère.

### 9. Minimisation / Autodénigrement

*A complimente B ; B fait un petit commentaire négatif pour relativiser la valeur de l'objet du compliment.*

- (17) A : Tu as une belle jupe.  
B : Merci, mais je la trouve un peu trop courte.

*A complimente B ; B fait un petit commentaire dans lequel il/elle dénigre sa propre personne pour contrebalancer l'évaluation positive de A.*

- (18) A : Dis donc, papa, tu as encore les réflexes du football [soccer].  
B : Laisse, mon fils, ton papa est déjà fini comme la lime.
- (19) A : Tu te débrouilles mieux que je ne le pensais, papa.  
B : Mes vieux os tiennent encore. Merci.

**10. Expression de la surprise**

*A complimente B ; B se montre surpris par le compliment.*

- (20) A : Papa, tu t'es bien défendu pendant le match. C'était incroyable.  
B : Comme ça? / Ah bon? / Vraiment?

**11. Contestation de la sincérité du complimenteur / Demande de confirmation**

*A complimente B ; B s'interroge sur la sincérité du compliment et / ou demande à A de confirmer son évaluation positive.*

- (21) A : Tu es vraiment sapé [Tue s vraiment bien habillé].  
B : Tu trouves? / Crois-tu? / Penses-tu? / C'est vrai ça, chérie? / Es-tu vraiment sincère? / Tu en es sûre?
- (22) A : Tu es encore en forme, mon chéri.  
B : J'espère que ce n'est pas une moquerie

**12. Réactions humoristiques**

- (23) A : Tu as vraiment l'œil, ma chérie.  
B : C'est ça. Sans cet œil je ne suis rien.
- (24) A : Dieu a vraiment pris du temps pour te créer.  
B : Je ne suis donc pas n'importe qui.
- (25) A : Gars, tu es vraiment frais aujourd'hui.  
B : On va faire comment? C'est tout ce qui nous reste, être chaud.

*A complimente B ; B accepte implicitement le compliment en y ajoutant un brin d'humour pour détendre l'atmosphère et consolider la relation avec A.*

**13. Offre**

*A complimente B ; B offre / propose l'objet du compliment à A.*

- (26) A : Le repas était vraiment délicieux.  
B : Il y en a encore.

*A complimente B ; B se propose d'aider A à acquérir l'objet complimenté.*

- (27) A : Comment fais-tu pour être toujours frais comme ça?  
B : Si tu veux, je peux te donner mon tuyau [te dire mon secret].

4.2. COMBINAISONS DE PLUSIEURS TYPES DE RÉPONSES. Les réponses complexes sont constituées de combinaisons de plusieurs types de réponses simples où le remerciement occupe une position centrale, comme le montrent les exemples (28)–(46).

### 1. Remerciement & minimisation

*B remercie A et enchaîne sur une légère diminution de l'évaluation.*

- (28) A : C'est un travail de professionnel !  
B : Merci, mais il y a à refaire.

### 2. Remerciement & commentaire

*B remercie A et ajoute un commentaire sur le lieu d'acquisition de l'objet, les circonstances de l'acquisition, les motivations de l'action, etc.*

- (29) A : Papa, tu es vraiment polyvalent. Tu t'adaptes à tout.  
B : Merci, fiston. Cela fait partie de notre éducation.
- (30) A : Tu as conçu un plan superbe. La maison est très belle !  
B : Merci, j'ai toujours rêvé d'une maison pareille.

### 3. Remerciement & commentaire/conseil

**B remercie A et ajoute un commentaire qui s'apparente à un conseil.**

- (31) A : Maman, mais tu es fraîche dans ta tenue !  
B : Merci ma fille. Tu sais, même comme on n'est plus jeune, on ne doit pas se négliger.

### 4. Remerciement & auto-éloge

*B remercie A et enchaîne avec un commentaire auto-flatteur.*

- (32) A : Ta maison est très jolie. Dis, qui t'apprends à faire un tel choix ?  
B : Merci, mais j'ai quand même les yeux pour voir.

### 5. Remerciement & éloge du complimenteur initial

*B remercie A et renvoie le même compliment à ce dernier ou le complimente sur un autre objet.*

- (33) A : Vous êtes sveltes, pratiquez-vous un art martial ?  
B : Merci, vous n'êtes pas mal non plus.
- (34) A : Tu es fort élégant aujourd'hui ! C'est une nouvelle tenue ?  
B : Merci, exactement, tu es très observatrice !

**6. Remerciement & expression de la joie**

*B remercie A et exprime sa joie en même temps.*

- (35) A : Qu'est-ce que tu es beau dans cet habillement!  
B : Merci. Cela me va tout droit au cœur

**7. Question / Expression de la surprise & expression de la joie**

*B exprime sa surprise et remercie A pour le compliment.*

- (36) A : Papa, cet espace est mieux que l'ancien site.  
B : C'est vrai ? J'en suis ravi.
- (37) A : Apparemment tu as changé de couturier, tu es hyper jolie.  
B : Ah bon ? Merci beaucoup.

**8. Remerciement & promesse de mieux faire**

*B remercie A et promet de s'améliorer.*

- (38) A : Continue dans cette voie, ton avenir est des plus prometteurs.  
B : Merci, j'essayerai de faire mieux la prochaine fois.

**9. Remerciement & transfert à une tierce personne**

*B remercie A et enchaîne sur l'apport/l'aide d'une tierce personne dans l'acquisition/la réalisation de l'objet.*

- (39) A : Je trouve votre maison très sublime.  
B : Merci ! C'est le travail de ma femme.

**10. Remerciement & demande de récompense**

*B remercie A et demande une récompense à ce dernier.*

- (40) A : C'est bien fait. Du courage !  
B : Merci, achète-moi alors le chocolat.

**11. Remerciement et promesse**

- (41) A : Ta technique est parfaite, tu es vraiment brillante !  
B : Merci, si tu le souhaites, je te montrerai quelques points.
- (42) A : Tu vois que maintenant tes cheveux sont plus propres et tu es beaucoup plus beau !  
B : Merci tata, je promets toujours de bien me coiffer.

## 12. Remerciement et vœu

(43) A : C'est toi qui habite cette jolie maison ? C'est vraiment encourageant !

B : Merci, mais dès que tu auras les moyens, tu feras comme moi.

(44) A : Tu m'as offert un repas extraordinaire, un repas de souvenir. Le goût était impeccable.

B : Merci, je serais heureuse de te recevoir une autre fois.

## 13. Remerciement et commentaire ludique

(45) A : Ma chérie, tu as toujours été d'une beauté extrême.

B : Merci mon amour. C'est pourquoi tu m'as toujours aimée.

(46) A : Tu sais que tu ne cesses de me séduire avec ton mignon visage !

B : Dieu merci pour mon visage qui a une force séductrice, haha ha !

5. DISCUSSION: LES MESSAGES DES RÉPONSES. Le compliment est généralement présenté comme un bienfait pour le bénéficiaire et un « lubrifiant » pour les relations sociales. Les réponses attestées dans notre corpus donnent toutefois l'impression qu'il y a plusieurs raisons qui président au choix des types de réponses.

L'expression de la gratitude et/ou de la joie indique que le complimenté conçoit le compliment comme un cadeau. Il faut alors ré-établir l'équilibre social rompu par le fait d'être en position de débiteur. A travers le remerciement se projette donc l'image d'une personne reconnaissante et l'expression de la joie indique l'effet perlocutoire du cadeau reçu.

Le compliment peut aussi être perçu comme une demande d'information ou une invite à un échange plus dense. D'où le recours au commentaire souvent employé en lieu et place du remerciement. Le commentaire se présente sous forme d'apport d'informations sur la genèse, la finalité de l'action complimentée ou le lieu d'obtention de l'objet du compliment. Dans la perspective du jeu des faces, on peut dire que ce type de réponse est valorisant pour les faces des deux protagonistes. Si on suppose que le compliment est souvent soutenu par le souci de savoir comment le complimenté en est arrivé à l'objet admiré, on peut interpréter le commentaire comme une forme de générosité et d'encouragement. Le commentaire applique pour ainsi dire la maxime de générosité énoncée par Leech (1983:133). C'est-à-dire que l'apport d'informations laisse entrevoir l'image d'une personne qui ne se contente pas de garder le secret de sa « réussite » pour soi, mais qui veut le partager avec son vis-à-vis afin que ce dernier puisse en faire autant. On a aussi affaire à l'application de la maxime de tact (Leech, 1983:132) dans la mesure où le complimenté œuvre indirectement pour la maximisation du bénéfice pour le complimenteur. Si le commentaire n'est pas émaillé de propos d'auto-flatterie et d'arrogance, il permet de valoriser la face du complimenteur en lui faisant part de quelque chose d'utile et de verbaliser l'image d'un complimenté ouvert et généreux.



Le compliment peut aussi être perçu comme une demande d'aide, une requête. D'où le recours aux réactions comme le conseil, l'encouragement, l'offre, etc. Le renvoi du compliment montre que le compliment peut fonctionner aussi, aux yeux du complimenté, comme une quête de compliments. C'est dans cette perspective que le complimenté rend la pareille au complimenteur. Le recours à l'auto-éloge (c'est-à-dire au renforcement du compliment initial) comme type de réponse laisse entrevoir la perception du compliment comme une occasion pour le bénéficiaire de se mettre en valeur, d'affirmer ou de réaffirmer sa supériorité, d'exalter son orgueil personnel, au grand dam de l'interlocuteur complimentant.

Le rejet du compliment est une indication que le cadeau verbal constitue plutôt une menace pour la face du complimenté ou une intrusion dans son territoire. Ce type de réponse se lit alors comme le refus de se laisser observer davantage. A cela s'ajoute le fait que le compliment est perçu comme un cadeau intéressé dont il faut se méfier. D'où la remise en question de la sincérité du complimenteur ou la demande de confirmation de son intention initiale. La menace que suscite une telle réaction concerne aussi bien la face du complimenteur que celle du complimenté. Il arrive aussi que le compliment se présente comme un prétexte pour détendre l'atmosphère et renforcer les liens existants. On ponctue alors l'échange de réponses humoristiques.

6. CONCLUSION. L'échange de compliments en contexte camerounais est une activité socio-discursive complexe. Les personnes complimentées disposent de plusieurs possibilités pour réagir au cadeau verbal. Ce faisant, les complimentés transmettent des messages divers. Si les travaux antérieurs ont toujours présenté le compliment comme un cadeau verbal, il faut relever à la faveur de nos observations que l'interlocuteur complimenté peut véhiculer dans ses réponses des perceptions plutôt diversifiées du compliment. Il serait alors important d'analyser l'impact des types de réponses dans le cadre d'une approche conversationnelle. L'occasion sera ainsi offerte de voir comment les interlocuteurs réagissent effectivement aux différentes réponses au compliment et comment celles-ci régulent les relations interpersonnelles.



## RÉFÉRENCES

- AL FALASI, HESSA. 2007. Just say "Thank you:" A study of compliment responses. *The linguistics journal* 2(1):28–42. [http://www.linguistics-journal.com/April\\_2007\\_haf.php](http://www.linguistics-journal.com/April_2007_haf.php).
- BARNLUND, DEAN C. & SHOKO ARAKI. 1985. Intercultural encounters: The management of compliments by Japanese and Americans. *Journal of cross-cultural psychology* 16(1):9–26.
- BILOA, EDMOND. 2003. *La langue française au Cameroun*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- BROWN, PENELOPE & C. STEPHEN LEVINSON. 1987. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- CEDAR, PAYUNG. 2006. Thai and American responses to compliments in English. *The linguistics journal* 1(2):6–28. [http://www.linguisticsjournal.com/June 2006\\_pc.php](http://www.linguisticsjournal.com/June%202006_pc.php).
- CHEN, RONG. 1993. Responding to compliments: A contrastive study of politeness strategies between American English and Chinese speakers. *Journal of pragmatics* 20:49–75.
- CHEN, SHU-HUI EILEEN. 2003. Compliment response strategies in Mandarin Chinese: Politeness phenomenon revisited. *Concentric: Studies in English literature and linguistics* 29(2):157–84.
- DAIKUHARA, MIDORI. 1986. A study of compliments from a cross-cultural perspective: Japanese vs. American English. *Working papers in educational linguistics* 2(2):103–34.
- FOSSO, 1999. Le Camfranglais: Une praxéogénie complexe et iconoclaste. In *Le français langue africaine. Enjeux et atouts pour la francophonie*, sous la direction de Gervais Mendo Ze, 178–94. Paris: Publisud.
- GAJASENI, CHANSONGKLOD. 1994. A contrastive study of compliment responses in American English and Thai including the effect of gender and social status. PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- GOLATO, ANDREA. 2005. *Compliments and compliment responses: Grammatical structure and sequential organization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- HOLMES, JANET. 1986. Compliments and compliment responses in New Zealand English. *Anthropological linguistics* 28:485–508.
- HOLMES, JANET. 1988. Paying compliments: A sex-preferential politeness strategy. *Journal of pragmatics* 12:445–65.
- KERBRAT-ORECCHIONI, CATHÉRINE. 1987. La description des échanges en analyse conversationnelle: L'exemple du compliment. *DRLAV – Revue de linguistique* 36/37:1–53.
- . 2005a. *Les actes de langage dans le discours*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- . 2005b. *Le discours en interaction*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- LEECH, N. Geoffrey. 1983. *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- MENDO ZE, GERVAIS (dir.). 1999. *Le français langue africaine. Enjeux et atouts pour la FRANCOPHONIE*. Paris: Publisud.
- MULO FARENKIA, BERNARD. 2004. *Kontrastive Pragmatik der Komplimente und Komplimenterwiderungen. Kamerunisch – Deutsch*. Aachen: Shaker.
- . 2005. Kreativität und Formelhaftigkeit in der Realisierung von Komplimenten. Ein deutsch-kamerunischer Vergleich. *Linguistik online* 22(1):33–45. [http://www.linguistik-online.de/22\\_05/mulo\\_a.html](http://www.linguistik-online.de/22_05/mulo_a.html).
- . 2006. *Beziehungskommunikation mit Komplimenten. Ethnographische und gesprächsanalytische Untersuchungen im deutschen und kamerunischen Sprach- und Kulturraum*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- NELSON, GAYLE, WAGUIDA EL-BAKARY & MAHMOUD AL-BATAL. 1993. Egyptian and American compliments: A cross-cultural study. *International journal of intercultural relations* 17:293–313.
- NELSON, GAYLE, MAHMOUD AL-BATAL & ERIN ECHOLS. 1996. Arabic and English compliment responses: Potential for pragmatic failure. *Applied linguistics* 17(4):411–32.

- POMERANTZ, ANITA. 1978. Compliment responses: Notes on the cooperation of multiple constraints. In *Studies in the organization of conversational interaction*, ed. Jim Schenkein, 79–112. New York: Academic Press.
- PU, ZHIHONG. 2003. *La politesse en situation de communication sino-française. Malentendu et compréhension*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- RUHI, ŞÜKRIYE. 2006. Politeness in compliment responses: A perspective from naturally occurring exchanges in Turkish. *Pragmatics* 16(1):43–101.
- & GÜRKAN DOĞAN. 2001. Relevance theory and compliments as phatic communication: The case of Turkish. In *Linguistic politeness across boundaries: The case of Greek and Turkish*, ed. Arin Bayraktaroglu & Maria Sifianou, 341–90. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- SIFIANOU, MARIA. 2001. “Oh! How appropriate!” Compliments and politeness. In *Linguistic politeness across boundaries: The case of Greek and Turkish*, ed. Arin Bayraktaroglu & Maria Sifianou, 391–430. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Speech Acts Bibliography. Compliments /responses. <http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/bibliography/compliments.html>.
- TRAVERSO, VÉRONIQUE. 1996. *La conversation familière. Analyse pragmatique des interactions*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon.
- WEIL, SYLVIE. 1983. *Trésors de la politesse française*. Paris: Belin.
- WIELAND, MOLLY. 1995. Complimenting behavior in French/American cross-cultural dinner conversations. *The French review* 68(1):796–812.
- WOLFSON, NESSA. 1989. *Perspectives: Sociolinguistics and TESOL*. Rowley MA: Newbury House.





## ROBERT E. HOWARD: GETTING THE LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND RIGHT

ROBERT ORR

THE CREATION OF FANTASY WORLDS involving interactions between different population groups, of whatever size, inevitably raises the issue of language and communication among such groups. It goes without saying that the larger and more complex the fantasy world, and the greater the number of different groups involved, the greater the opportunities for playing with linguistic interaction, and the data arising therefrom, and using them to add colour to the background.

1. INTRODUCTION. This paper was partly inspired by a series of workshops run by Alexander Gross at LACUS Forum 32 in 2006, where he outlined some of the ways in which writers of fiction ignore linguistic issues.<sup>1</sup> During the workshop a quick mental check of my favourite authors, mainly horror and fantasy in this context, showed that nearly all of them paid varying degrees of attention to such issues, even if they did get certain details wrong. Two examples of the handling of the issues of language change may be illustrated thus, with others later on in the paper.

In James Herbert's *The Shrine* linguistic differences play a major role in revealing a case of demonic possession across four centuries:

- (1) **It wasn't a foreign accent, but one of an English county that he could not quite place. West Country, yet not quite. Too thick, too heavy...** Old language. Sounds like Shakespeare... That's precisely what it is... I remembered a new treatment of Shakespeare's plays at the National I saw several years ago [where] all the actors spoke Elizabethan English... An authority on the subject had tutored them in the accent used at that time... it was quite different, not just in form, to the language we speak today... [Alice] was quoting Shakespeare in her sleep?... **She was speaking the language of that period, possibly before its time, in its correct idiom.** (p. 315)<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The materials from the workshops were not published in the proceedings, and Gross himself did not cite examples of the phenomena to be raised here.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Alberge 2005: "The Globe Theatre is to become the first professional theatre company in 400 years to stage an entire run of a Shakespeare play in the original pronunciation. The actors will recite their lines with accents that are believed to be close to those that would have been heard on the Elizabethan stage... In rehearsal, the actors found that... [the] meter, puns, verse and rhymes word[ed] again. David Crystal spoke of 'the many shafts of linguistic sunlight' that illuminate a Shakespeare play done in the original pronunciation. [He said,] 'The more the text relies on pronunciation for its effect, the more you'll notice it. *Midsummer Night's Dream* is entirely based on rhyme. When you listen to it, a fair number of the rhymes don't work. With the original

H.P. Lovecraft in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* shows that even two doubles, one from the 1700's and the other from the 1920's, can be distinguished by their language:

- (2) They thought it was he who went in, and they thought it was he who came out...  
**But you hadn't reckoned on the different contents of two minds. You were a fool... Curwen, to fancy that a mere visual identity would be enough. Why didn't you think of the speech and the voice and the handwriting?** [emphasis added]

This paper will argue that the fiction of Robert E. Howard, one of the classic fantasy writers of the early twentieth century, and the creator of Conan, Solomon Kane, etc., shows a consistently high degree of awareness of linguistic issues in the creation of his fantasy worlds, down to quite a detailed level on occasion, ahead of the other writers of fantasy with whom he is normally compared, approaching that of C.S. Lewis, and even J. R. R. Tolkien, despite some apparent problems with details.

2. ASSESSMENT: LANGUAGE AS BACKGROUND. It would be far beyond the scope of a paper this length to produce a comprehensive ranking of understanding of linguistic issues by twentieth century fantasy writers. For a preliminary study such as this, however, focusing on Howard, it will be useful to cite two levels of comparison:

1. Clark Ashton Smith, a near contemporary of Howard's, who wrote similar material for similar publications, will be cited for comparison purposes. Smith, however, was far less consistent than Howard in his use of linguistics to create a background to his fantasies, as will be argued below.
2. The linguistic aspects of invented fantasy worlds were much more important for C.S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. Both Lewis and Tolkien projected their professional interest in languages into their fiction, and, taken together, provide a sort of gold standard for linguistic knowledge among fantasy writers.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis' main character in his *Out of the Silent Planet* is actually a philologist, with a full-time academic position and the minutiae of the protagonist's fieldwork forms an important

---

pronunciation, they will all work... There's a great joke in *Troilus and Cressida*, but nobody ever gets it. It's when Thersites harangues Achilles about Ajax in Act 2: "for whomsoever he be, he is Ajax." It isn't noticed in modern pronunciation. Indeed, the line seems rather pointless. But in original pronunciation, it would have raised a huge laugh among the groundlings. In Shakespeare's time the name was pronounced like 'a jakes'... the word for pisshouse."

<sup>3</sup> Lewis was Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at the University of Cambridge and Tolkien, who combined immense philological erudition with an ability to write action prose, was Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford.

part of the backdrop to the story.<sup>4</sup> Tolkien appears to have gone a step further: in fact, he claimed to have first invented the languages, and then written the stories around them (1983:7, see also Colbert 2002:81–88).<sup>5</sup>

3. LANGUAGE FOR CHILDREN. Both Lewis and Tolkien also wrote stories for children. In these stories they both paid less attention to linguistic issues than in their adult fiction. One area where language very often surfaces in children's literature, however, is that animals often speak different languages from humans, and special talents are needed to understand them, see, e.g., Beatrix Potter (1903: 36), Hugh Lofting (1920).<sup>6</sup>

Lewis pretty well ignores the issue of languages in his Narnia series, primarily written for children, right through from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to *The Last Battle*. The only area where he addresses the issue at all is his distinction between Talking Beasts, who speak human language, and dumb beasts which have no language at all.

One of Tolkien's most famous works, *The Hobbit*, was also primarily written for children, but even there, Tolkien makes language, specifically interpreting, an essential point of the story on three occasions, each time with different animal characters.<sup>7</sup>

#### Wolves:

- (3) "... a great grey wolf ... spoke to them in the dreadful language of the Wargs. **Gandalf understood it. Bilbo did not ... I will tell you what Gandalf heard, though Bilbo did not understand it.**" (1988:111)

#### Thrushes:

- (4) "Leave him alone!" said Thorin. "The thrushes are good and friendly... **the men of Dale used to have the trick of understanding their language,** and used them for messengers to fly to the men of the Lake and elsewhere." (1988:240)

<sup>4</sup> "...b disappears after c' [noted Ransom], and made his first step in Malacandrian phonetics" (86).

<sup>5</sup> "This tale grew in the telling until it became a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of yet more ancient history that preceded it. It was begun soon after the *Hobbit* was written and before its publication in 1937; but I did not go on with this sequel, for I wished first to complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder days, which had then been taking shape for some years. I desired to do this for my own satisfaction, and **I had little hope that other people would be interested in this work since it was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of history for Elvish tongues** [emphasis added]. When those whose advice and opinion I sought corrected *little hope to no hope* [emphasis original], I went back to the sequel."

<sup>6</sup> "But it is in the old story that all the beasts can talk, in the night between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in the morning (**although there are very few folk that can hear them, or know what it is that they say**)."

<sup>7</sup> The illustrations to the *Hobbit* usually include Thrór's map with runes, written in a different alphabet (invented by Tolkien), and explained by Elrond (1988:63–64).

- (5) **"All the while they talked the thrush listened,** till at last when the stars began to peep forth it silently spread its wings and flew away." (1988:241)
- (6) "Suddenly out of the dark something fluttered to his shoulder. He started—but it was only an old thrush. Unafraid it perched by his ear and brought him news. **Marvelling he found he could understand its tongue, for he was of the race of Dale.**" (1988: 261)
- (7) "I believe [the thrush] is trying to tell us something" (1988:268).

**Ravens:**

- (8) "Oh Thorin son of Thrain and Balin son of Fundin," he [the raven] croaked (**and Bilbo could understand, for he used ordinary language and not bird-speech**" (1988: 269).

4. ROBERT E. HOWARD.

4.1. BACKGROUND. In citing material from Howard, we will mainly be concerned with two of his heroic fantasy background creations; Valusia (100,000 BP) and the Hyborian Age (15,000 BP), and two of his adapted historical periods: the Roman conquest of Britain, and the "Puritan era" in English history,<sup>8</sup> each of which is centred round one of Howard's larger-than-life heroes (Conan of Cimmeria, King Kull, Bran Mak Morn, and Solomon Kane respectively), with the first-named displaying greater linguistic knowledge than the others.

Howard's own degree of overall linguistic awareness may be illustrated with the following quote:

- (9) **In his roaming about the world ... [Conan] ... had picked up a wide smattering of knowledge, particularly including the speaking and reading of many alien tongues. Many a sheltered scholar would have been astonished at the Cimmerian's linguistic abilities,** for he had experienced many adventures where knowledge of a strange language had meant the difference between life and death. (*Jewels of Gwahlur*)

Howard's best developed creation was the Hyborian Age, set about 15,000 years before the present, before the last great glaciation, with the actual stories centred round Conan of Cimmeria. It was written so convincingly that Howard had to include a warning that it was just meant as a framework for stories and not as an alternative view of history: ("Nothing in this article is to be considered as an attempt to advance any theory in opposition to accepted history. **It is simply a fictional background for a series of fiction-stories.**")<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> I say "adapted" to capture the degree of liberty taken by Howard – his "Roman Britain" is full of major anachronisms, such as, e.g., Viking raids (*Kings of the Night*), and his very characterisation of Solomon Kane as a "Puritan" is open to question, despite Ramsey Campbell's special pleading (1978, 1979) in the latter instance.

<sup>9</sup> Howard describes the transition from the Hyborian Age to the Modern Age thus: "The western world was now dominated by Nordic barbarians... There were no cities anywhere, except in



He actually made use of names as evocative as Tolkien's in his fantasy worlds, using a mixture of authentic and invented/adapted names, some of which have a curiously modern ring, e.g., *Aquilonia*, *Asgalun*, *Brythunia*, *Cimmeria*, *Darfar*, *Hyrkania*, *Khita*, *Nemedia*, *Pelishtia*, *Punt*, *Shem*, *Stygia*, *Zamora*, *Zaporoska*, *Zembabwei*, *Zingara*, etc. (place-names); *Asshur-ras-arab*, *Balthus*, *Olgerd Vladislav*,<sup>10</sup> *Olmec*, *Thutmekri*, *Xaltotun*, *Xotalanca*, *Zargheba*, *Zogar Sag*, etc. (names of persons); *Crom*, *Derketo*, *Jhebbal Sag*, *Set*, *Asura* (names of gods or cults), and he scattered his brief summary of the history of his invented lands with comments on the languages his imagined peoples would have spoken. In one case he even appears to have hypothesised the language, and then worked backwards to invent a country for it, e.g., *Koth* < *Kothic*.<sup>11</sup> Howard's non-Hyborian works do not show such an elaborate background.

The argumentation in this paper will mainly be based on quotes from Howard's works which point to such linguistic awareness, especially regarding the following two general topics: the General Linguistic Background to Stories; Language Origins (the pre-fire stage of language development, see Orr 2007 and the literature cited therein); and three more specialised topics: Indo-European Linguistics and Indo-European External Relations; African Linguistics; Semitic Linguistics and Ancient Scripts. These will be compared and contrasted with similar quotes from Smith, Lewis, and Tolkien.

4.2. THE GENERAL LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND TO THE STORIES. Howard never lost sight of the linguistic background to his invented worlds, as may be seen over and over again from reading any one of his short stories. A selection will make this point clear:

---

Stygia and the lands of Shem; the invading tides of Picts, Hyrkanians, Cimmerians and Nordics had levelled them in ruins, and the once dominant Hyborians had vanished from the earth... Only a few names of lands, tribes and cities remained in the languages of the barbarians...the whole history of the Hyborian age was lost sight of in a cloud of myths and fantasies. Thus in the speech of the gypsies lingered the terms Zingara and Zamora; the Æsir who dominated Nemedia were called Nemedians, and later figured in Irish history, and the Nordics who settled in Brythunia were known as Brythunians, Brythons or Britons..."

So far, so good. Later on, however, Howard comes unstuck, over non-linguistic issues: "The blond Achaïans, Gauls and Britons, for instance, were descendants of pure-blooded Æsir. The Nemedians of Irish legendry were the Nemedian Æsir. The Danes were descendants of pure-blooded Vanir, etc., etc. ... The Cimbri who fought Rome were of the same blood, as well as the Gimmerai of the Assyrians and Grecians [*sic*], and Gomer of the Hebrews... The origins of other races of the modern world may be similarly traced; in almost every case, older far than they realize, their history stretches back into the mists of the forgotten Hyborian Age." (*The Hyborian Age*)

<sup>10</sup> Any Slavist, of course, would recognise this hybrid Lithuanian-Slavic form as an anachronism: Vladislav cannot be earlier than seventh or eighth century.

<sup>11</sup> From Tolkien's own coinages, it appears that he would have cited such forms in far greater detail, with appendices giving etymologies of invented simplex and compound forms, phonological rules, adapting sound-changes attested in his favourite languages, e.g., *Caradhras* (oronym), he explains as < \**caran+rass* (n > dh/-r, cf. Old Icelandic *maðr* < \**mann+r* 'Redhorn' (1983:1147). He might have developed *Koth* and *Kothic* by adding extra forms, and given an explanation in his Appendices.

- (10) As you know, I have been employed in translating manuscripts for Xaltotun, for some months now, transcribing esoteric volumes written in the younger languages into script he can read. **He was well versed in all the tongues and scripts of his day, but he has not yet learned all the newer languages, and to save time he has me translate these works for him,** to learn if any new knowledge has been discovered since his time. (*The Hour of the Dragon*)<sup>12</sup>
- (11) When he set down the viands, Kane spoke to him in a dialect of the bush tribes, to one of the divisions of which he believed the man belonged, having noted certain tribal scars on his features... **the man answered in a tongue similar enough for Kane to understand him.** (*Children of Asshur*)
- (12) The lone ambassador was now almost even with their hiding-place, and suddenly Balthus almost jumped out of his skin. **At his very ear had sounded the harsh gutturals of a Pict. Then he realized that Conan had called to the paddler in his own tongue.** (*Beyond the Black River*)
- (13) "What does the dog say?" **demanded Valbroso impatiently, not understanding Kothic.** "Will he tell us how to open the box?" (*The Hour of the Dragon*)
- (14) "Goddess! Ha!" His bark was full of angry contempt. He ignored the frantic writhings of his captive. "I thought it was strange that a princess of Alkmeemon would **speak with a Corinthian accent!**"... Muriela's voice came plainly to Conan's ears in the breathless silence, and it seemed cold, detached, impersonal, **though he winced at the Corinthian accent...** There was a quiver in her voice as she ended, and Conan began to sweat, believing she was on the point of an hysterical collapse. But the blacks did not notice, **any more than they identified the Corinthian accent,** of which they knew nothing. (*Jewels of Gwahlur*)
- (15) "Wulfhere," said Bran, "we have brought you a king. I hold you to your oath." ... "Let him speak to us," said the Viking harshly... **"He cannot speak your tongue,"** answered Bran... "He comes out of the past," broke in the wizard calmly. "He was the greatest of all kings, long ago." ... Wulfhere scowled: "Shall a ghost lead living men?" ... "Wulfhere," said Bran... "We have brought you a king neither Pict, Gael nor Briton and you deny your vow!" ... "Let him fight me, then!" howled Wulfhere... "If your dead man overcomes me—then my people will follow you. If I overcome him, you shall let us depart in peace to the camp of the legions!" ... "Good!" said the wizard. "Do you agree, wolves of the North?" A fierce yell and a brandishing of swords was the answer. **Bran turned to Kull, who had stood silent, understanding nothing of what was said. But the Atlantean's eyes gleamed...** "This warrior says you must fight him for the leadership," said Bran, and Kull, eyes glittering with growing battle-joy, nodded: **"I guessed as much."** (*Kings of the Night*)

<sup>12</sup> Smith also used translation as a device to contribute to an atmosphere, as effective as Howard's: "Will you please re-read your translation?" he requested. 'I want to follow it very carefully, word by word.'... 'That is a most remarkable passage,' he commented. **'I was doubtful about its meaning, with my imperfect Arabic; and I have found that the passage is wholly omitted in the Latin of Olaus Wormius. Thank you for your scholarly rendering. You have certainly cleared it up for me.'** (*The Return of the Sorcerer*)

- (16) He lifted the spear in a ponderous salute, and **spoke in the dialect of the river-tribes**: “This is not the white man’s land. Who is my white brother in his own kraal and why does he come into the Land of Skulls?” ... “My name is Solomon Kane,” the white man answered **in the same language**. (*The Hills of the Dead*)

A comparison with Tolkien is instructive at this point. He describes a scene similar to (10)–(16) above, especially (16) as follows: “There was a sound of soft laughter over their heads, and then another clear voice spoke in an elven-tongue. Frodo could understand little of what was said, for the speech that the Silvan folk east of the mountains used among themselves was unlike that of the West. **Legolas looked up and answered in the same language**.” (1983:360) Tolkien footnotes that paragraph “See note in Appendix F: Of the Elves” (1983:1161–62). It is very difficult to imagine Howard footnoting such items.

Meanwhile, Smith displays a far more sporadic awareness of the issue of language change. For the purposes of this paper his *The Holiness of Azédarac* may be contrasted with *Xeethra*, *The Black Abbot of Puthuum*, and *The Empire of the Necromancers*. *The Holiness of Azédarac* is partly centred round a voyage 700 years into the past from the centre of the story, and Smith is careful to note language change as a background to the story:

- (17) “Come with me,” she [Moriamis] said to Ambrose, in a tongue that his monastic studies enabled him to recognize as an obsolete variant of the French of Averroigne—a **tongue that no man had supposedly spoken for many hundred years**... “Yea,” countered Moriamis, “it is even stranger than you dream. Tell me, Brother Ambrose, what was the year in which you entered the Inn of Bonne Jouissance?”... “**Why, it is the year of our Lord, 1175, of course. What other year could it be?**”... “According to... Christian missionaries,” ... [replied Moriamis,] “the present year is **A.D. 475. You have been sent back no less than seven hundred years into what the people of your era would regard as the past.**”

One might take issue with Smith’s terminology: using “French” as a catch-all term for the different stages of the language spoken in Averroigne in 475 and 1175 (and in 1230, at the end of the story) is an oversimplification, but the overall idea of language change as described here is quite sound.<sup>13</sup>

*Xeethra*, on the other hand, is centred around both spatial, and temporal displacement, but at the same time shows no awareness of linguistic problems. A poor goatherd finds out

<sup>13</sup> Smith apparently based *Averroigne* on the Auvergne Region in South Central France, which has been a fairly complex area linguistically throughout the history of French, lying as it does on the border between *Langue d’oc* in the south and *Langue d’oïl* in the north, resulting in a sort of mixed Franco-Provençal being spoken until quite late, with standard French not yet universal until into the twentieth century (Lodge 1993:195–97, 204). Furthermore, the period 475–1175 (1230) spans *three* normally accepted stages in the development of French (Proto-French – Early Old French – ‘Classical’ Old French, see Lodge (1993:9–10). Lodge (1993:48–49) also points out that the local aristocracy would only recently have learnt Latin by 475, and Gaulish may have been spoken in the area as late as the ninth century.

that he is a reincarnation of a king from a previous millennium on the other side of the continent of Zothique. He leaves his uncle's hovel and makes his way across the whole continent to try and find his former kingdom, apparently without facing any language difficulties:

- (18) ...He had paid little heed to the mumblings and objurgations of Pornos; but it was plain that the old man **doubted his claims to royal rank, and, moreover, was possessed of peculiar delusions regarding his identity...** Xeethra came to the small village of Cith, to whose inhabitants he was known... **The people gathered about him, calling him by name, and staring and laughing oafishly when he inquired the road to Calyz. No one, it appeared, had ever heard of this kingdom or of the city of Shathair.** Noting a strangeness in Xeethra's demeanor, and deeming that his queries were those of a madman, the people began to mock him... Xeethra met certain sellers of amulets... **who smiled oddly when he asked if they could direct him to Calyz. Winking among themselves when he spoke of his royal rank, the merchants told him** that Calyz was situated several hundred leagues beyond Sha-Karag, below the orient sun... **The lepers hailed him with hoarse cries and hollow croakings,** as if deeming him another outcast who had come to join them in their abode amid the ruins... **"Who are ye that dwell in my palace of Shathair?"** he inquired at length. "Behold! I am King Amero, the son of Eldamaque, and **I have returned from a far land** to resume the throne of Calyz." At this, a loathsome cackling and tittering arose among the lepers. **"We alone are the kings of Calyz,"** one of them told the youth. **"The land has been a desert for centuries,** and the city of Shathair had long lain unpeopled save by such as we, who were driven out from other places... **Know, then, that in another birth, ages ago, you were indeed the young King Amero. The memory, being strong upon you, has effaced the remembrance of your present life, and has driven you forth to seek your ancient kingdom.'**

The extracts from *Xeethra* have been cited at some length to show that Smith appears to have made no attempt to add linguistic details, although there is great potential for doing so. One wonders how Howard would have handled that story. In *The Black Abbot of Puthuum*<sup>14</sup> and *The Empire of the Necromancers*<sup>15</sup> the issue of language change is not even mentioned. The careful reader will note that the latter three stories are from Zothique, while *The Holiness of Azédarac* is from Averoigne. Zothique, however, is supposed to be a whole continent, hundreds of leagues across, and with history spanning millennia, at a stage of development roughly equivalent to the Dark Ages, and therefore one would

<sup>14</sup> "Here I have remained ever since, dying and rotting eternally—and yet eternally alive. **For almost a millennium I have suffered unsleepingly** the dire anguish of repentance that brings no expiation."

<sup>15</sup> "The prophecy was, that an evil greater than death would befall the emperors and the people of Cincor in future times; and that the first [Hestaiyon] and the last [Illeiro] of the Nimboth dynasty, **conferring together** [no language difficulties], would effect a mode of release and the lifting of the doom."

expect to find a great deal of linguistic diversity and evidence of language change. Contrast this situation with Howard's Hyborian Age, where language diversity and change are fully accommodated.

Finally, Howard does not neglect linguistic issues even in his weaker stories:

- (19) Ax ready to dash out his brains, I bent over him, and recognized him as the [Norse] chief who had slain Prince Murrough... **and now he spoke to me in Norse and I understood, for had I not toiled as slave among the sea people for long bitter years?** (*The Cairn on the Headland*)

4.3. LANGUAGE ORIGINS. Howard's stories often feature creatures on the borderline between human and non-human. His treatment of the communicative capacities of such creatures can be made to fit in very well with the view of language origins as outlined in Orr 2007, for which see, and the literature cited therein. Two extensive passages might be cited and commented on here, one from *Rogues in the House*, featuring Conan, and one from *Wings in the Night*, featuring Solomon Kane:

- (20) "In Mitra's name, Nabonidus," gasped Murilo, shaken, "what is it?" ... "That is Thak," answered the priest, caressing his temple. **"Some would call him an ape, but he is almost as different from a real ape as he is different from a real man. His people [*sic*] dwell far to the east... They are in the formative stage; they are neither apes, as their remote ancestors were, nor men, as their remote descendants may be. They... know... nothing of fire or the making of shelter or garments, or the use of weapons. Yet they have a language of a sort, consisting mainly of grunts and clicks."** (*Rogues in the House*)
- (21) The akaanas [the Harpies of Greek mythology, see (27) below] lived in caves, naked like beasts; they **knew nothing of fire** and ate only fresh, raw meat. But they had a **language of a sort** and acknowledged a king among them. (*Wings in the Night*)
- (22) Murilo realized that... Nabonidus spoke truth when he said that **Thak was not wholly a beast. There was something in the red murky eyes, something in the creature's clumsy posture, something in the whole appearance of the thing that set it apart from the truly animal. That monstrous body housed a brain and soul that were just budding awfully into something vaguely human...** Even [Conan] sensed this, for he panted: **"I have slain a *man* tonight, not a *beast*."** (*Rogues in the House*)<sup>16</sup>
- (23) No, Kane decided, [the akaanas]... were a freakish offshoot on the branch of **evolution—for Kane had long ago dimly sensed a truth in the heretical theories of the ancient philosophers, that Man is but a higher beast...** If Nature made

<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere (*The Hour of the Dragon*) Conan has a similar encounter with a true ape, to which no language is imputed at all.

many strange beasts in the past ages, why should she not have experimented with monstrous forms of mankind? (*Wings in the Night*)

As knowledge of the working of the brain becomes more sophisticated, it is becoming clear that the simple evolutionary emergence of a single “language component” therein is becoming less and less likely, see Lamb 1999 (*passim*), and the articles in Minette and Wang (2005). Much recent research is concentrated on arguing that manifestations of culture such as art (Walker & Shipman 1996:226–27), or music (Mithen 2006) may be the best pointers to determine a time period for the emergence of human language.

Building on work by scholars such as Perlès 1977, Bickerton 1990, 2000, Goudsblom 1992, 2002, in Orr 2007 I suggest that another such pointer, indeed, a watershed may be seen in the evolution of human language with the discovery of fire. From (21) it is clear that Howard was aware of evolutionary theory, and was able to link that awareness to language evolution. Again, it should be noted that Howard’s main focus was the story itself, e.g., Tolkien might have included an Appendix on the “languages” actually spoken by Thak and the akaanas, and how their “grammar” might have differed from that of human or elvish languages.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of the very different attitudes shown by Conan and Kane, both Thak and the akaanas might be said to represent a stage of language described by Bickerton as ‘proto-language’ (1990, 2000, see also Calvin & Bickerton 2000, Boyd & Silk 2006:444–45), which would have been developed by prehuman primates, with the juxtaposition of concepts together in phrases, but nothing more elaborate, e.g., ‘skid crash hospital’ (Bickerton 2000:273), further developed by Orr 2007:455–58, see also the literature cited therein for discussion. By suggesting that the languages spoken by Thak and the akaanas are a pre-fire stage of human development on two occasions, Howard showed some degree of appreciation for linguistic evolution.<sup>18</sup> As one who has speculated on the relationship between knowledge of fire and language evolution (Orr 2007), I can only express regret that creatures such as Thak and the akaanas do not exist in the real world.

In this context, any views on Smith’s ideas of language evolution as can be gleaned from his writings would of necessity involve the development of human language throughout human history, with no mention of pre-human speech.<sup>19</sup> His two major fantasy worlds are

<sup>17</sup> Linguistically Tolkien’s *Woses* (Wild Men of the Woods) are far closer to humans than Thak or the akaanas (1983:863–67), and can speak the Common Speech.

<sup>18</sup> In this context it might be noted that Gee’s reconstruction (2000:222) of a relict population of *Homo erectus* in Sumatra actually represents a step back from Howard’s fiction: “These creatures are found to walk as erect as you or I, **use fire** and make tools, **but have no language**—at least, none we recognise—and do not wear clothes” (emphasis added).

<sup>19</sup> One candidate for speakers of pre-human language in Smith’s stories might be the Voormis, who appear in his Hyperborean tales, e.g., *The Seven Geases*, but their vocalisations are described merely as “wild and dog-like ululations” ... “ferocious howlings” ... “snarling and snapping” ... and the Voormis themselves are described as “... the offspring of women and certain atrocious creatures that had come forth in primal days from a tenebrous cavern-world in the bowels of Voormithadreth.



Zothique, set far in the future, in the run-up to the end of the Earth, and Hyperborea, set in a pre-glaciation period at the start of human evolution. As Smith makes hardly any comments about language itself in his works, unlike Howard, one must examine his invented names and lexemes for clues. Whitechapel points out that the names in Zothique are:

...based on **simple consonant-vowel syllables**, often contain the liquids 'l' and 'r', the glide 'y', and the lisping fricative "th" (as in "thin"): ... *Tinarath, Yoros, Dalili, Xeethra, Yadar, Altath, Manthar, Ilalotha, Xylac, Thulos, Zyra*. (2000, emphasis added)

To summarise "the names used in the Zothique cycle are suggestive of decadence and of the enervated phonology of an ancient, dying language" (*ibid*).

In Hyperborea, however, names are "barbarically rich to the point of uncouthness": *Zhothaquah*<sup>20</sup> ... *Cythereans* ... *Bhlemphroims, Djhenquomb, Loquamethros*, ... *Knygathin Zhaum*", although it is unclear to what extent this is a function of the orthography.

Meanwhile, in a number of works Bichakjian (1996, 1998) has argued strongly in favour of a theory which can be summarised as follows: Language can be seen to be evolving unidirectionally, towards a situation where "*late-acquired linguistic features*... [are replaced]... *with ever-earlier acquired alternatives*." (1996:160, emphasis original), borrowing the concept of *neoteny* from biology (the retention of juvenile features by adults).<sup>21</sup>

Considering, therefore, that Hyperborea is meant to represent the earliest stage of human history, and therefore human linguistic history, and Zothique at the final stage thereof, it may be suggested that Smith serendipitously anticipated Bichakjian by several decades.

4.4. SPECIFIC LANGUAGES: INDO-EUROPEAN LINGUISTICS AND INDO-EUROPEAN EXTERNAL RELATIONS; AFRICAN LINGUISTICS; SEMITIC LINGUISTICS AND ANCIENT SCRIPTS. There are a series of passages from *Children of Asshur*, worth quoting extensively as they reveal, without further comment, Howard's understanding of the history of Indo-European,

---

Smith's treatment of communication with other non-human beings in *The Seven Geases*—Tsathoggua, Atlach-Nacha, Haon-Dor, the serpent-people, the Archetypes, and Abthoth— involves various devices such as "though the words were of no mortal tongue, it seemed to the listener that he comprehended them darkly."

<sup>20</sup> On at least one occasion Smith, and other authors who cite his invented names, make use of variation as a device to contribute to the atmosphere: *Zhothaquah* also appears as *Tsathoggua* (the most common variant), *Ossadogowah*, *Sodagui*, *Tsadogwa*, etc., although Smith does not develop this idea (see Colavito 2005:88, 93).

Howard's names are rarely cited with variants, although "Solomon Kane" is dubbed "Suleiman Kahani" on one occasion: "I am the sheikh Hassim ben Said," said the Arab. "Who are you?" "My name is Solomon Kane," growled the puritan in the **sheikh's own language**. "I am an Englishman, you heathen jackal." The dark eyes of the Arab flickered with interest. "**Suleiman Kahani,**" **said he, giving the Arabesque [*sic*] equivalent of the English name.**" (*The Footfalls Within*)

<sup>21</sup> Bichakjian's views have not remained unchallenged, see Orr 1999:149–50 and the literature cited therein.

and its relations with the non-Indo-European languages it encountered, basically as a reflection of the period he was writing in: the 1920s and 1930s (see also the list of names cited above):

- (24) “What city is this?” ... **“Ninn, bwana.”** ... “Who are these people?” The dull slave shook his head in doubt... “They be very old people, bwana. They have dwelt here very long time.” ... “The man with the lash?” ... **“Yamen, the priest, bwana Persian.”** ... “Why do you call me that?” asked Kane nonplussed. **“So the masters name you, bwana.”**
- (25) Kane was startled to note that in some of the older scenes, men were depicted whose apparel and features were entirely different from those of the Ninnites. These strangers were always pictured in battle scenes... [Their] carven features were like the countenance of a friend in a strange land to the wanderer. **Apart from their strange, barbaric arms and apparel they might have been Englishmen, with their European features and yellow locks. Somewhere, in the long, long ago, Kane knew, the ancestors of the men of Ninn had warred with men kin to his own ancestors. But in what age, and in what land?** ... And suddenly Kane remembered where he had seen similar carvings, wherein kings with black curled beards slew lions from chariots. **He had seen them on crumbling pieces of masonry that marked the site of a long forgotten city in Mesopotamia, and men had told him those ruins were all that remained of Nineveh the Bloody, the accursed of God.**
- (26) “Sula,” he said, “what do these people call themselves?” **“Assyrians, bwana,”** answered the slave... **And Kane realized why they called him a Persian, seeing in him a resemblance to those wild old Aryan tribesmen who had ridden down from their mountains to sweep the Assyrian empire off the earth.** Surely it was fleeing those yellow-haired conquerors that the people of Ninn had come into Africa.” (*Children of Asshur*)

This discussion leads us to another area where Howard revealed a degree of linguistic awareness. In the actual, untranslated dialogue between Kane and Sula in the latter’s language (see (24) and (26) above), “Persian” would have sounded something like *parsiya* (possibly \**mparsiya* plural *waparsiya*), and “Assyrians” something like \**washuru* (singular \**mwashuru*, cf. Swahili *Warabu* singular *Mwarabu* ‘Arab’). Kane would have undoubtedly understood all of these forms, as is clear from other stories in the cycle. He ranged over large areas of sub-Saharan Africa, and came into contact with several African languages, and Swahili has been used as a proxy for them in this paper, based on some of Howard’s descriptions, and the fact that Howard has Sula use the form *bwana* ‘master’, in (24) and (26) above.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The following quotes might be cited, in addition to (16), in support:

“You come again, brother,” droned the fetish-man, **speaking in the jargon which passed for a common language of black man and white** on the West Coast. (*The Hills of the Dead*)



Howard actually appears to display some knowledge of Bantu word formation, as is shown in a revealing passage in *Wings in the Night*:

- (27) ...a chieftain and his warriors fought [the akaanas, see (21)] with bows and arrows and slew many, driving the rest into the south. The name of the chief was **N' Yasunna...** who was the chief **N' Yasunna** but the hero **Jason...**

*N' Yasunna* looks like a fair attempt at reconstructing a Bantu adaptation of Greek Ἰάσων (*Iasōn*/Jason), derived by prefixing Bantu *\*(V)n(V)-* to *\*yasun* and assigning the resulting form *\*nyasun* to the *n-* class. In Swahili borrowings are assigned to the *n-* class, and initial *n-* can only be followed by *g, d, j, z,* and *y*, which makes *N' Yasunna* quite a plausible form for most of Central Africa, where Solomon Kane stories are vaguely set.

Similarly, passage (28) recalls Rawlinson's decipherment of cuneiform Old Persian, etc.:

- (28) The characters were puzzling, at once familiar and unintelligible. They were the characters of archaic **Pelistic**,<sup>23</sup> which possessed **many points of difference from the modern script, with which he was familiar**, and which, three centuries ago, had been modified by conquest by a nomad tribe. **This older, purer**<sup>24</sup> **script baffled him. He made out a recurrent phrase, however, which he recognized as a proper name: Bit-Yakin...** "I found a manuscript that told me a number of things, and then stumbled upon some frescoes that told me the rest." (*Jewels of Gwahlur*)

---

Kane **spoke to her in a river dialect, a simple language he had learned during his wanderings and she replied haltingly.** The inland tribe traded slaves and ivory to the river people and **were familiar with their jargon.** (*The Hills of the Dead*)

"Listen," said Kane, **in the dialect of the river tribes.** "Do not fear me." (*Wings in the Night*)

"What is this place?" asked Kane **in a language he had learned that was similar to the dialect just used.** (*Wings in the Night*)

The man spoke in **an unfamiliar dialect, one which was strangely distinct and clear-cut in contrast to the guttural jargon of the natives with whom Kane was familiar.** The Englishman spoke in English, and **then in the language of the river tribes.** "You who come through the ancient door," said the other **in the latter dialect,** "who are you? You are no savage." (*Moon of Skulls*)

It might be noted that, from a purist's point of view, Howard's apparently interchangeable use of "language" and "dialect" here is a little sloppy. Again, however, the distinction does not interfere with the stories as a whole.

<sup>23</sup> Clearly derived from a pointed variant of the Hebrew *P-L-Sh-T-*, which also gives us *Philistine*, *Palestine*, etc.

<sup>24</sup> Terms such as 'pure' are loaded in linguistic discussions, and normally should be avoided. Nevertheless, they are better applied to writing systems, inventions of and modifications of which often can be traced to single individuals, e.g., Mesrop Maštoč, Saints Cyril and Methodius, Cicero, Sequoia, etc.

Just as Conan used the name *Bit-Yakin* as a sort of lever towards the decipherment of the mysterious manuscript, later supplemented by frescoes, Rawlinson, under far more dramatic circumstances, but with far time to play with, used the names of the Persian Kings (*Darius, Hystapes, Arsames, Ariamnes, Teispes* (twice), *Cyrus, Cambyses, Achaemenes*) as recorded in Herodotus Greek as a stepping stone to deciphering the inscription of cuneiform Old Persian in the Valley of the Kings, etc., eventually with success, see, e.g., Ryan and Pitman (2000:21–30).<sup>25</sup>

5. CONCLUSION. Howard's linguistic awareness does not extend to all aspects of language. In *The Cairn on the Headland* (see also (19) above) he does show an awareness of language change similar to Smith in *The Holiness of Azédarac*:

- (29) “What would you be doing at the cairn?” she asked... **I looked at her in surprise; she spoke in Gaelic, which was not strange of itself, but the Gaelic she used I had supposed was extinct as a spoken language: it was the Gaelic of scholars pure, and with a distinctly archaic flavour.** A woman from some secluded hill country, I thought, where the people still spoke the unadulterated tongue of their ancestors... “We were speculating on its mystery,” **I answered in the same tongue, hesitantly, however, for though skilled in the more modern form taught in the schools, to match her use of the language was a strain on my knowledge of it.** Meve MacDonnal had been wearing sandals of a type not worn in Ireland for centuries... I made out the words and figures, in **the half-forgotten Gaelic of three centuries ago: Meve MacDonnal 1556–1640.**

In *Kings of the Night*, however, Howard assumes a mutual intelligibility maintained after 100,000 years,<sup>26</sup> when King Kull of Valusia is brought forward that amount of time to command a company of Vikings to aid the Picts, Gaels, and Britons in battle against the Romans:

- (30) Such was the man [King Kull] who paused before the silent group. He seemed slightly puzzled, slightly amused. Recognition flickered in his eyes. He spoke in a **strange archaic Pictish which Cormac scarcely understood.** His voice was deep and resonant.

The wording “scarcely understood” does imply **some** degree of mutual intelligibility. It might be noted that the subsequent passage includes a linguistically more plausible scenario, see (15) above. But at least Howard has dealt with the issue. It may be contrasted with Xeethra's farewell to Pornos in *Xeethra* cited above, or Hestaiyon conferring with Illeiro in

<sup>25</sup> Rawlinson's achievement took place at around the same time as Darwin's finches (1835) and deserves to be as well known in intellectual history.

<sup>26</sup> According to some scholars, human language itself has not existed for that long, see Orr (2007:452–23, 455), and the literature cited therein.

*The Empire of the Necromancers*.<sup>27</sup> In this context Whitechapel 2007 has missed an important point: “But it wasn’t merely that CAS (Smith) served wine and absinthe at his bar in the *Cacoethes*, while REH (Howard) served ale and mead at his. CAS at his best innovates and creates new flavors, new intoxications; REH, even at his best, only imitates and his flavors are almost always tainted with modernity.” This is true as far as it goes: Smith’s word coinages admittedly are often better than Howard’s, but as we have seen, the overall linguistic background to Howard’s stories is far more plausible.

Howard’s linguistic interests do seem to have had their limitations however. The linguistic comments in most of his stories help to build the atmosphere, in ways that professional linguists would find little fault with, even if Howard glosses over matters such as phonetic minutiae, or fine distinctions between language and dialect. Nevertheless, passages like the following also occur—to the layman they help with the atmosphere, but grate on anyone with any sort of linguistic knowledge:

- (31) Brule laughed. “**No snake-man... can say these words,**” and again Kull heard the strange phrase; *Ka nama kaa lajerama...* “Aye, you remember, Kull,” said Brule. “Through the dim corridors of memory... uncounted centuries ago, those words were watchwords for the race of men who battled with the grisly beings of the Elder Universe. For none but a real man of men may speak them, **whose jaws and mouth are shaped different from any other creature.**” (*The Shadow Kingdom*)

On two occasions, as noted above, Howard did get the linguistics right, while coming up short on other issues: storytelling (*The Cairn on the Headland*) and history (*The Hyborian Age*). Nevertheless, it may be stated that Howard is one of the better fantasy writers that the genre has produced as far as linguistics is concerned.

Finally, one important difference between Howard on the one hand and Tolkien on the other, may be noted here, which illustrates one major difference in their approach to their work. For Tolkien the languages were primary, whereas for Howard, the story itself was primary, and the linguistic background material only seems to have been used insofar as it helped to created the necessary atmosphere:

“Howard was a first-rate teller of tales... above all, Howard was a story-teller. The story came first, last, and in between. Don’t look for hidden philosophical meanings or intellectual puzzles in the yarns—they aren’t there. *Howard was a story-teller.*” (John D. Clark, quoted in Sprague de Camp 1974:12–13, emphasis original)

Thus tension between actual story-telling and literature/philology has been present in the history of Western culture for a long time: Page (1966:xxvi) describes a similar tension between early epic Greek poetry and later Classical Latin poetry: “To the Homeric story-teller and his hearers the story is the chief thing, and its literary form the second;

<sup>27</sup> Imagine Hugues Capet conversing with Louis XVI, or Robert II with the present Queen.

to Virgil and his readers literary art is the first thing, and the actual facts of the story are comparatively unimportant.”

It would be seen that in all three areas listed above a full comparison of Howard and Smith reveals that Howard's overall grasp of linguistic factors, much of which Smith simply ignores, was far ahead. The linguistic backgrounds to Howard's stories are far more consistent and plausible, and are on a level approaching Tolkien, and Lewis in *Out of the Silent Planet*, perhaps not as much in the latter two's adult fantasy, but certainly ahead of their children's stories.

At first sight, the comparison with Tolkien hinted at earlier in the paper may seem far-fetched. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Tolkien lived to be eighty (1893–1973), whereas Howard committed suicide at the age of thirty (1906–1936). A fair comparison, therefore, would only admit works written published by Tolkien before 1923, which might lead to some interesting conclusions.<sup>28</sup> One can only regret that Howard chose to take his own life at such a young age, and not develop his full potential as a fantasy writer.

---

<sup>28</sup> And anything published by Lewis (1898–1963) after 1928, or Smith (1893–1961), after 1923 as well. Similarly, David Powelstock (p.c.) points out that comparisons of the work of Pushkin (1799–1837) and Lermontov (1814–1841), both of whom were killed in duels, should include this consideration, although he does caution against citing it too often. However, a spread such as that between Tolkien and Howard can hardly be ignored.



## REFERENCES

- ALBERGE, DALYA . 2005. It's back to the drawing bard for Globe actors.  
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1698181,00.html>.
- BICHAKJIAN, BERNARD H. 1988. *Evolution in language*. Ann Arbor: Karoma.
- . 1996. Evolution: From biology to language. *Kaupia: Darmstädter Beiträge zur Naturgeschichte* 6.153–163.
- BICKERTON, DEREK. 1990. *Language and species*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2000. How protolanguage became language. In *The evolutionary emergence of language*, ed. Chris Knight, Michael Studdert-Kennedy & James R. Hurford, 264–84. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BOYD, ROBERT & JOAN SILK. 2006. *How humans evolved*, 4th ed. London: Norton.
- CALVIN, WILLIAM & DEREK BICKERTON. 2000. *Lingua ex machina: Reconciling Darwin and Chomsky with the human brain*. London: MIT Press.
- CAMPBELL, J. RAMSEY. 1978. Introduction. In *Solomon Kane: Skulls in the stars*, by Robert E. Howard. New York: Bantam Books.

- . 1979. The mystery of Solomon Kane. In *Solomon Kane: The hills of the dead*, by Robert E. Howard, ix–xii. New York: Bantam Books.
- COLAVITO, JASON. 2005. *The cult of alien gods: H. P. Lovecraft and extraterrestrial pop culture*. New York: Prometheus Books.
- COLBERT, DAVID. 2002. *The Lord of the Rings: The amazing myths, legends, and facts behind the masterpiece*. Toronto: MacArthur & Company.
- GEE, HENRY. 2000. *Deep time: Cladistics, the revolution in evolution*. London: Fourth Estate.
- GOUDSBLOM, JOHAN. 1992. *Fire and civilisation*. London: Penguin Group.
- . 2002. Introductory overview: The expanding anthroposphere. In *Mappae mundi: Humans and their habitats in a long-term socio-ecological perspective*, ed. Bert de Vries & Johan Goudsblom, 21–46. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- HERBERT, JAMES. 1984. *The shrine*. London: New English Library.
- HOWARD, ROBERT E. 1928. *Children of Asshur*. (<http://arthursclassiconovels.com/arthurs/howard/chila10.html>)
- . 1929. *The shadow kingdom*. (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso6/0603491.txt>)
- . 1930a. *Kings of the night*. ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kings\\_of\\_the\\_Night](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Kings_of_the_Night))
- . 1930b. *The hills of the dead*. ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Hills\\_of\\_the\\_Dead](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Hills_of_the_Dead))
- . 1930c. *The moon of skulls*. ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Moon\\_of\\_Skulls](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Moon_of_Skulls))
- . 1931. *The footfalls within*. (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso6/0600861.txt>)
- . 1932a. *The Hyborian age*. ([http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Hyborian\\_Age](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Hyborian_Age))
- . 1932b. *Wings in the night*. (<http://arthursclassiconovels.com/arthurs/howard-r/0600881b.html>)
- . 1933. *The cairn on the headland*. (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso6/0601721b.html>)
- . 1934. *Rogues in the house*. (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso6/0600781b.html>)
- . 1935a. *Beyond the Black River*. (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso6/0600741b.html>)
- . 1935b. *Jewels of Gwahlur*. (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso6/0600761b.html>)
- . 1936. *The hour of the dragon*. (<http://gutenberg.net.au/ebookso6/0600981.txt>)
- LAMB, SYDNEY. 1999. *Pathways of the brain*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- LEWIS, CLIVE S. 1996[1934]. *Out of the Silent Planet*. Thorndike MA: G.K. Hull.
- LODGE, R. ANTHONY. 1993. *French: From dialect to standard*. London: Routledge.
- LOFTING, HUGH. 1920. *The story of Dr. Doolittle*. ([http://publicliterature.org/books/story\\_of\\_doctor\\_doolittle/xac.php](http://publicliterature.org/books/story_of_doctor_doolittle/xac.php))
- LOVECRAFT, H.P. 1943. *The case of Charles Dexter Ward*. (<http://www.dagonbytes.com/thelibrary/lovecraft/thecaseofcharlesdexterward.htm>)
- MINETT, JAMES W. & WILLIAM S.-Y. WANG, eds. 2005. *Language acquisition, change and emergence: Essays in evolutionary linguistics*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.
- MITHEN, STEVEN. 2006. *The singing Neanderthals: The origins of music, language, mind, and body*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- ORR, ROBERT. 1999. Evolutionary biology and historical linguistics. Review of R.M.W. Dixon, *The rise and fall of languages*. *Diachronica* XVI(1):123–57.

- . 2007. A 'terminus circa quem' for the 'emergence' of 'human' 'language'? *LACUS forum* 33:51–62.
- PAGE, T. E. 1966. *Virgil: Aeneid II*. London: MacMillan.
- PERLÈS, CATHERINE. 1977. *Préhistoire du feu*. Paris: Masson.
- POTTER, BEATRIX. 1903. *The tailor of Gloucester*. London: Frederick Warne.
- RYAN, WILLIAM & PITMAN, WALTER. 2000. *Noah's flood: The new scientific discoveries about the event that changed history*. New York: Touchstone.
- SMITH, CLARK ASHTON. 1931. *The return of the sorcerer*. (<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/short-stories/183/the-return-of-the-sorcerer>)
- . 1932a. *The door to Saturn*. (<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/short-stories/50/the-door-to-saturn>)
- . 1932b. *The empire of the necromancers*. (<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/short-stories/61/the-empire-of-the-necromancers>)
- . 1933. *The holiness of Azédarac*. (<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/short-stories/91/the-holiness-of-azédarac>)
- . 1934a. *The seven geases*. (<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/short-stories/192/the-seven-geases>)
- . 1934b. *Xeethra*. (<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/short-stories/250/xeethra>)
- . 1936. *The black abbot of Puthuum*. (<http://www.eldritchdark.com/writings/short-stories/15/the-black-abbot-of-puthuum>)
- SPRAGUE DE CAMP, LYON. 1934. Introduction. In *Conan the Freebooter*, by Robert E. Howard & L. Sprague de Camp, 9–13. London: Sphere.
- TOLKIEN, J.R.R. 1983. *The lord of the rings*. London: Unwin paperbacks.
- . 1988. *The annotated Hobbit*, ed. Douglas Anderson. New York: Touchstone.
- WALKER, ALAN & PAT SHIPMAN. 1996. *The wisdom of bones: In search of human origins*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- WHITECHAPEL, SIMON. 2000. Wizard with words. <http://www.eldritchdark.com/articles/criticism/12/wizard-with-words>.
- . 2007. The wine of words: Inquisitioning the verbiviniculture of Clark Ashton Smith. <http://www.eldritchdark.com/articles/criticism/71/the-wine-of-words%3A-inquisitioning-the-verbiviniculture-of-clark-ashton-smith>.



## LA REPRÉSENTATION EN TROIS DIMENSIONS DES SYSTÈMES PHONOLOGIQUES

JEAN-FRANÇOIS SMITH  
*Université de Lausanne*

DANS LE CADRE DE MES RECHERCHES EN ÉPISTÉMOLOGIE DE LA PHONOLOGIE FONCTIONNELLE<sup>1</sup>, mon attention s'est récemment portée sur un problème qui n'est peut-être plus d'actualité, mais qu'il vaudrait la peine de rouvrir. En effet, au tournant des années 1980, un débat a eu lieu dans la revue *La linguistique* au sujet de l'utilité véritable des tableaux de phonèmes et sur la façon dont on doit les interpréter (voir Mulder 1978, Walter 1982, McCalla 1983, Hervey 1984).

Rappelons que cette représentation classique des phonèmes est pour l'essentiel pratiquement assimilable à un tableau purement phonétique. La forme est tabulaire, avec le plus souvent les lieux d'articulation en colonne et les modes articulatoires à l'horizontal. Les sons remplissent alors la case qui leur correspond (on trouvera [m] à l'intersection de *labial* et de *nasal*, par exemple).

La différence cruciale réside en ce que le tableau phonologique, forcément, ne représente pas du tout des sons, mais des phonèmes. On y met en relation des traits pertinents, afin de faire ressortir certains rapports partagés entre les unités distinctives. Ainsi, une colonne *labial* ne réfère plus à une réalité phonétique, mais bien relationnelle et oppositive. Bref, on illustre, en tout ou en partie, un *système phonologique* (voir par exemple McCalla 1983:65, 67).

Cette schématisation a attiré la grande méfiance des fonctionnalistes d'approche formaliste (Mulder et Hervey). Pour ceux-ci, le tableau ne doit être que phonologique, en ce sens qu'il ne doit représenter *que* ce qui est constitutif du système et *tout* ce qui l'est. C'est pourquoi ils ont dénoncé les fameuses cases vides et qu'ils ont cherché à s'en défaire totalement<sup>2</sup>, jugeant inadéquat le tableau des phonèmes dans sa forme traditionnelle.

Les fonctionnalistes réalistes (Walter et McCalla)<sup>3</sup> ont répondu que le tableau de phonèmes n'a simplement pas cette fonction de systématisation. Il permet plutôt de visualiser le dynamisme d'un système, c'est-à-dire ses potentialités d'évolution et d'instabilité. Il est ainsi, pourrait-on dire, volontairement imparfait.

---

<sup>1</sup> Il faut entendre la phonologie en linguistique fonctionnelle française, l'école d'André Martinet influencée par l'enseignement de Troubetzkoy. Toute la terminologie utilisée ici (phonème, trait, système, etc.) ne doit s'interpréter *que* dans ce cadre.

<sup>2</sup> Cette position découle d'une interprétation non orthodoxe des notions d'opposition et de système qu'ils nomment le « fonctional principe ». Voir Mulder (1978).

<sup>3</sup> Je les nomme ainsi du fait de leur association à la position de Martinet, qui s'est réclamé lui-même de cette épithète tout au long de sa carrière.



Mon objectif n'étant pas de revoir en profondeur les tenants et aboutissants de chacun des partis, je n'irai pas plus loin ici. Je propose plutôt de revisiter ce débat en recentrant la question sur le mode de représentation lui-même, et non ses modalités. Peut-on imaginer un remplaçant adéquat à l'orthodoxie du format tabulaire?

Il semblerait que oui, en regardant sérieusement du côté de la représentation en trois dimensions (3D) des systèmes phonologiques. Je ne suis d'ailleurs pas le premier à se tourner vers ce type de visualisation. Ils ont été plusieurs déjà à ressentir le besoin d'y recourir, dans le but d'illustrer un point quelconque de leur argumentation : par exemple Martinet (2000[1938]:263), à qui pourtant on n'associe pas ce genre de formalisation, Thomas (1963:65) et Tcheu (1967:95).<sup>4</sup> Mulder (1978), dans sa critique du tableau traditionnel, développe aussi un tel schéma 3D.

Donc, manifestement, on en a déjà tiré quelque profit, bien qu'encore de façon ponctuelle. Il reste alors à y réfléchir plus systématiquement. Est-ce que la 3D peut être davantage qu'un accessoire au besoin utile? Peut-on la développer sur des bases suffisamment solides afin de l'intégrer à la méthodologie fonctionnaliste et, ainsi, en faire un exercice pleinement opératoire?

En puisant à loisir parmi les très nombreux systèmes phonologiques qu'on trouve dans Martin (1997)<sup>5</sup>, je me suis mis à la tâche de créer des représentations 3D afin de mettre à l'épreuve cette idée. La recherche étant cependant toujours en cours, les réflexions qui suivent sont encore exploratoires.

**1. ASPECTS MÉTHODOLOGIQUES.** On peut classer les divers essais avec la 3D des fonctionnalistes en deux catégories, que je nommerai les représentations *quadrilatérales* et celles en *grappe*, pour lesquelles on peut en voir chacun un exemple à la **Figure 1**.

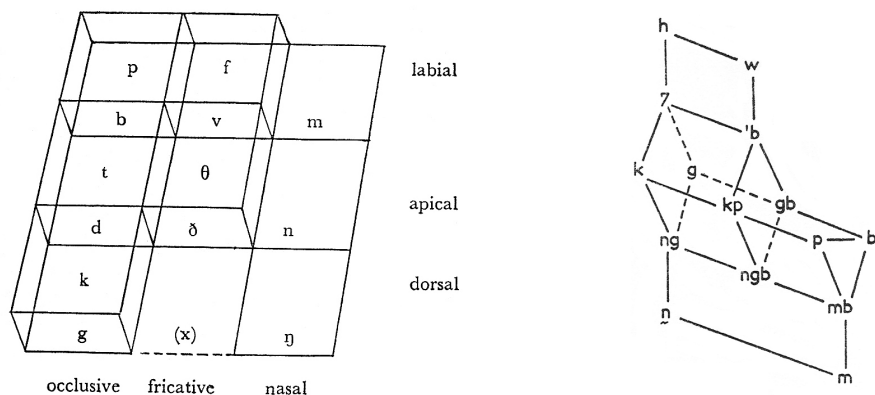
Le modèle quadrilatéral correspond à la conception systématisante des formalistes, dont fait partie Mulder, au sujet des systèmes phonologiques. Son schéma reproduit à la **Figure 1** montre les consonnes du Standard British English, moins les chuintantes et les sifflantes, qui forment un sous-système en lui-même (1978:11), plus la fricative [x] entendue chez certains informateurs pour les mots *loch* « lac » et *Bach* (le compositeur célèbre). Est de cette façon atteint l'objectif de remplir toutes les cases créées par les deux premières dimensions, sur lesquelles peut se superposer au besoin une troisième, le voisement.

Ce parallélisme ne vient cependant pas à n'importe quel prix. Mulder a recours à une stratégie très *ad hoc* en incorporant à son schéma un segment marginal. La mise en parenthèse du symbole et le pointillé en font même figure d'aveu. Du reste, il n'est pas clair du tout si cette consonne doit être considérée comme un phonème ou une variante. En outre, Mulder justifie la séparation du sous-système des chuintantes et des sifflantes en arguant que la dimension du voisement reste partagée entre les deux systèmes. Or, il y a là justement la base du modèle en grappe de Thomas.

<sup>4</sup> On trouve aussi des exemples dans d'autres cadres théoriques, comme par exemple Rocca (1994:263) en grammaire générative, mais je m'en tiens ici à la linguistique fonctionnelle (*cf.* note 1).

<sup>5</sup> J'ai utilisé les systèmes exactement comme on les trouve dans l'ouvrage. Leur valeur en soi, ou celle de leur source, n'a pas été une préoccupation nécessaire.





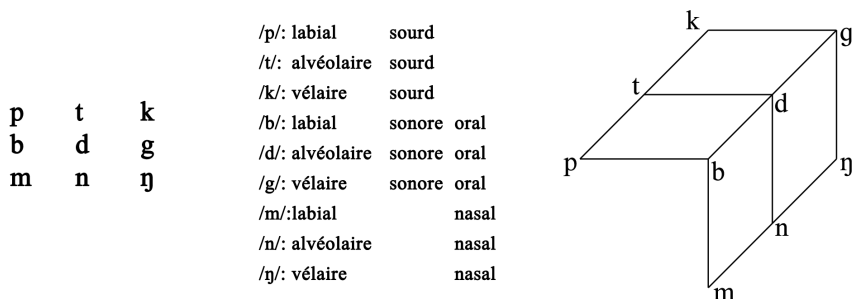
**Figure 1.** Schémas 3D quadrilatérale (à gauche, Mulder 1978) et en grappe (à droite, Thomas 1963). Dans la transcription de Thomas, 'b et ʔ correspondent respectivement à <sup>h</sup>b et ʔ en API. Le n portant le tilde – souscrit dans ce schéma, suscrit ailleurs – correspond à la nasale palatale ɲ.

En effet, non seulement le schéma en grappe implique-t-il que les rapports entre les phonèmes ne soient pas nécessairement égaux dans *toutes* les dimensions oppositives du système, mais il y a aussi ceci que la représentation visuelle du système phonologique devrait suivre la nature de ce dernier, et non l'inverse. En conséquence, dès lors que le système se subdivise à partir d'un point commun, d'après l'analyse que le linguiste en fait, il faut certainement l'illustrer dans son ensemble et non se limiter à ne modéliser que des systèmes partiels.

Il s'agit là d'un choix méthodologique d'importance dans la réalisation des représentations offertes à la section 2, qui suivent toutes conséquemment le modèle en grappe. Cependant, il faut adresser un reproche de taille au modèle de Thomas tel que reproduit dans la portion de droite de la **Figure 1**. D'après son analyse, la consonne qu'elle transcrit ['b] est la seule glottalisée du ngbaka. En sa qualité de phonème non intégrée, cette consonne entretient donc un rapport équivalent avec tous les autres phonèmes de son système. Cela n'étant pourtant pas du tout représenté, j'en conclus que, malgré le choix de la 3D, son schéma reste essentiellement phonétique au lieu d'être proprement phonologique.

Mon objectif est donc de réussir un traitement visuel le plus purement phonologique, sans éléments superfétatoires, n'illustrant que le système et tout le système, ce qui satisferait certainement un formaliste, mais sans imposer d'avance une forme particulière au schéma qui en résulte. Pour ce faire, ce qu'il faut représenter, ce sont les rapports les plus intimes entre les phonèmes. Il s'agit bien sûr des oppositions minimales entre deux unités où un seul trait les sépare, ce que Troubetzkoy (1986:69) appellerait pour la plupart des oppositions bilatérales, auxquelles Akamatsu (1992:53) préfère le concept plus large d'oppositions exclusives. Il faut en conséquence partir de la liste des traits pertinents établie par le linguiste plutôt que du tableau traditionnel, faisant ainsi miroiter directement l'analyse.

Le système consonantique très simple du dera, langue du Nord-Est de la Guinée, permet d'exemplifier rapidement cette méthode. La **Figure 2** (au verso) comprend trois représentations différentes des consonnes de cette langue : les phonèmes dans un tableau de



**Figure 2.** Trois formes du système consonantique du dera (d'après Martin 1997:113).

forme classique, la liste des traits pertinents dégagés après l'analyse fonctionnelle et enfin le schéma 3D qui en résulte.

On peut voir aisément pourquoi la 3D permet de visualiser la liste des traits d'une manière qui dépasse largement le tableau traditionnel. Là où, dans ce dernier, les phonèmes /p/, /b/ et /m/ s'alignent tous sur la même colonne (les labiales), le schéma 3D illustre avec clarté la différence de rapport qu'entretiennent à la fois /p~/b/, /b~/m/ et surtout /p~/m/. La première de ces paires permet de dégager l'opposition de sonorité et la seconde, la nasalité. La troisième, quant à elle, n'est pas une opposition définitoire au sens entendu ici car elle n'est pas exclusive. La seule base commune entre /p/ et /m/, la labialité, étant partagée par /b/, il n'y a par conséquent aucun nouveau trait saisissable par cette opposition.

Autre fait à noter, là où dans une autre langue l'inventaire phonologique des labiales se distinguerait le moins de celui du dera, seule la représentation 3D permettrait d'illustrer la différence de valeur phonologique des mêmes traits que l'on verrait pourtant dans la même colonne du tableau, avec le même symbole.

Ces observations sont également toutes valides pour les alvéolaires et les vélares du dera. La méthode proposée ici consiste donc à représenter sur différents axes les relations étroites entre certains phonèmes, qui sont ensuite partagées, ou étalées, dans un espace articuloire. Des labiales, ces relations sont ainsi transférées aux alvéolaires et enfin aux vélares, en tout ou en partie.<sup>6</sup>

Il s'en dégage que cette forme de représentation a fait ressortir deux classes de traits pertinents. Il y a, d'un côté, un ensemble de traits arrangés en paires, comme les oppositions sourd et sonore, nasal et oral, aspiré et non aspiré, labialisé et non labialisé, etc. On conçoit ces traits sur pôle oui/non, avec deux valeurs logiquement contradictoires. Il s'agit des traits de série, représentant les modes articuloires.

On a souvent nommé cette caractéristique la marque. Cependant, je n'insisterai pas sur ce point, après la critique profonde et convaincante de ce concept par Akamatsu (1978). Du reste, celui-ci a parfaitement raison de considérer que les traits pertinents peuvent toujours être phonétiquement définis de manière positive (voir 1992:37-38). Il n'en est que de l'ana-

<sup>6</sup> En effet, il ne faut pas s'attendre à voir se reproduire dans toutes les langues le parfait équilibre du dera.

lyse de ces traits qui en fait une logique binaire. Cela a aussi l'avantage de ne pas exclure les systèmes ternaires (une opposition sourd, sonore et mi-sonore, par exemple, voir **Figure 6**).

D'un autre côté, il existe un assortiment de traits totalement neutres les uns par rapport aux autres. Ils sont mutuellement exclusifs, mais ils ne suivent pas une organisation binaire, puisque chaque trait s'oppose également à tous les autres sans n'avoir de relation particulière avec aucun. Il s'agit cette fois des ordres, c'est-à-dire des lieux d'articulation. Le trait labial ne s'oppose pas plus à alvéolaire qu'à palatal, et vice versa; le trait vélaire n'est pas le contraire de dental, ni d'alvéolaire ou de pharyngale, pas plus que de palatal, et vice versa.

Pour mieux démontrer encore cette différence fondamentale dans la nature des traits, il n'y a qu'à jouer le formaliste extrême. Si l'on substituait le nom de tous les traits par des étiquettes distinctes mais arbitraires comme A, B, C, D, E, etc., il devient alors pratiquement impossible de déduire les observations précédentes. Cela rappelle toute l'importance de l'élément *phono* dans phonologie, car non seulement il appert que l'organisation des traits n'est pas partout la même, mais cette distinction a finalement une base phonique. Elle fait en sorte qu'un ensemble de rapports, les séries, puisse se multiplier. Il s'agit d'une facette intéressante de l'économie linguistique (en ce sens que l'ajout d'un seul trait permet de créer tout un groupe de phonèmes).

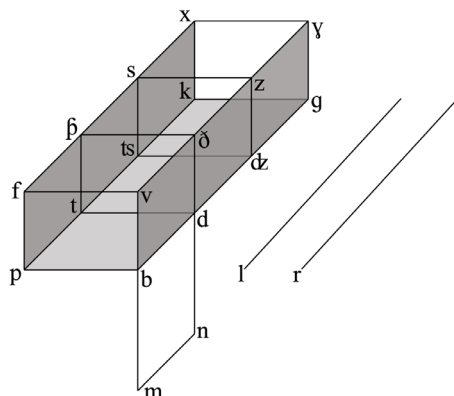
Voilà donc comment il faut définir, et justifier, l'axe de profondeur dans les schémas 3D présentés ci-dessous. Il faut garder à l'esprit que chaque plan superposé s'oppose à tous les autres et que la linéarité de cet axe force la présentation suggérée. Que les labiales et les vélares du dera à la **Figure 2** ne soient pas adjacentes ne change rien à ce que chaque ordre s'oppose également, ce qui inclut bien sûr les deux extrémités. Il faut effectivement considérer que la forme géométrique devrait se replier sur elle-même, comme s'il s'agissait, somme toute, d'un anneau qu'on a déployé pour mieux le visualiser.

2. EXEMPLES D'APPLICATION. Les schémas suivants sont des représentations 3D de systèmes consonantiques de langues diverses effectuées avec la méthode exposée à la section précédente. Chacun illustre une particularité de l'analyse phonologique dont on doit absolument tenir compte. Les tons de gris n'ont pour fonction que d'aider à la lecture et à la compréhension des figures.

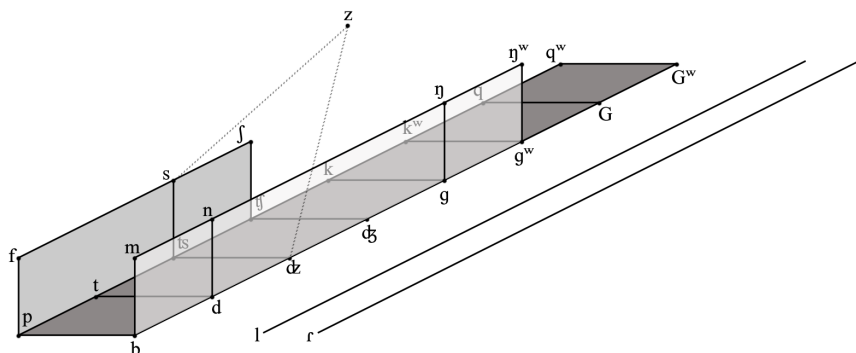
Je rappelle qu'il ne s'agit bien sûr que d'un échantillon tiré d'un travail plus ambitieux qui, notamment, inclut des systèmes vocaliques. Ceux-ci ont cependant leur lot de problèmes et certaines propriétés nouvelles qu'il est impossible de couvrir dans ces pages.

2.1. LE GREC. Le système consonantique grec (**Figure 3**, au verso) se compare assez bien au dera (**Figure 2**). La complexité de l'inventaire s'accroît en comparaison, révélant en fait une corrélation de sonorité, qui s'indique par l'orientation des deux plans verticaux.

L'intérêt principal de cet exemple reste néanmoins la représentation choisie des liquides. En leur qualité de phonèmes non intégrés, la latérale et la vibrante s'opposant à tous les autres phonèmes par leur trait unique respectif, ces phonèmes n'ont pas de place dans le réseau des paires corrélatives qui fondent la structure principale de l'objet 3D en tant que tel. D'une part, ils doivent occuper chacun l'intégralité de l'axe de profondeur, et ce, paral-



**Figure 3.** Système consonantique du grec (d'après Martin 1997:113).

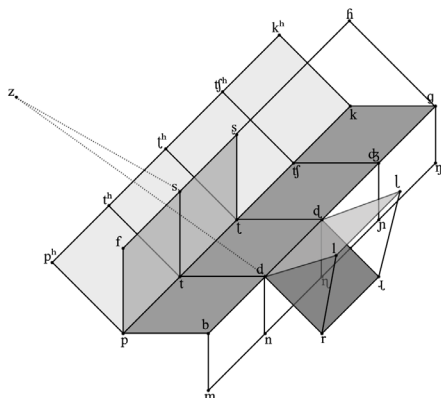


**Figure 4.** Système consonantique de l'awiya (d'après Martin 1997:117).

lèlement. D'autre part, ils n'ont en réalité aucune dimension verticale ou horizontale. C'est pourquoi les liquides ne sont qu'une ligne.

2.2. L'AWIYA. Les consonnes de l'awiya (**Figure 4**), une langue afro-asiatique, occupent un espace articuloire largement plus développé que le grec. En conséquence, il vaut mieux modifier légèrement l'angle de la figure pour produire une présentation plus longitudinale. Je reviendrai sur ce genre de manipulation visuelle à la section 3.

La grande originalité de la **Figure 4** par rapport aux schémas précédents est le traitement de /z/. En awiya, cette consonne est la seule fricative sonore du système, c'est-à-dire que seul ce phonème se définit par la combinaison de ces deux traits. Son lieu d'articulation étant par conséquent redondant, la consonne ne participe pas, phonologiquement, à la structure de l'objet 3D comme il a été défini dans la méthodologie. Toutefois, il ne s'agit pas d'un phonème non intégré comme les liquides grecques. Le /z/ doit alors impérativement se rattacher au schéma, dans ce cas-ci par les oppositions /z/~s/ (trait sonore) et



**Figure 5.** *Système consonantique du punjabi (d'après Martin 1997:126).*

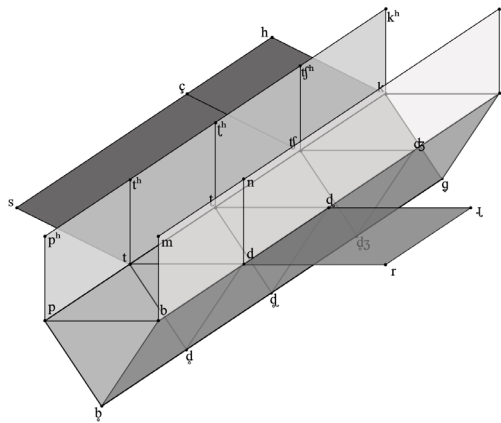
/z/~/ɬ/ (trait fricatif). C'est ce que signifient les lignes pointillées, qu'on peut s'imaginer élastiques. Le phonème peut en effet apparaître en tout lieu et à toute distance dans l'espace environnant la structure, mais ses liens avec celle-ci suivront nécessairement et n'en seront pour autant jamais brisés.

Une autre nouveauté consiste en la présence de nœuds à chaque point de rencontre des arêtes. Comme toutes les oppositions possibles de nasalité et de constriction ne sont pas exploitées, la longueur effective des deux plans verticaux parallèles est trompeuse.<sup>7</sup> S'il semble manquer certaines arêtes (par exemple à /t/, /ɬ/ et /ɮ/), c'est le choix de la représentation qui donne cette illusion. En effet, d'après la méthodologie établie, chaque lieu d'articulation s'oppose également à tous les autres. Leur séquence n'a donc aucune importance.

Dès lors, rien n'empêche de rapprocher les ordres qui exploitent les mêmes rapports afin d'éliminer ces espacements artificiels. Pour régler ce problème avec la nasalité, par exemple, il n'y aurait qu'à réordonner les consonnes g, g<sup>w</sup>, b, d, etc. On peut, grâce à cela, apprécier toute la différence entre la 3D et le tableau classique, dont la motivation phonétique reste finalement très élevée même en phonologie, car on ne penserait jamais y déplacer ainsi la colonne des vélaires. C'est donc ici que les nœuds entrent en jeu, car ce sont eux qui symbolisent la réalité du système phonologique.

2.3. LE PUNJABI. On retrouve le même type de fricative sonore phonologique qu'en awiya dans le schéma des consonnes du punjabi, une langue indienne (**Figure 5**). Autre fait notable, le sous-système des liquides s'intègre à l'ensemble.

<sup>7</sup> Pour faciliter la comparaison des plans, j'ai ici employé les tons de gris plutôt qu'une différence d'orientation pour distinguer les traits fricatif et de nasalité. Il faut donc lire la **Figure 4** un peu différemment de la **Figure 3**.



**Figure 6.** *Système consonantique du bengali (d'après Martin 1997:114).*

Il faut toutefois commenter le traitement particulier de /ɦ/. Phonétiquement une fricative glottale sonore, phonologiquement il s'agit seulement d'une fricative vélaire<sup>8</sup>, ce phonème étant le seul à partager la combinaison de ces deux traits, rendant par le fait même redondante la sonorité. De la sorte, cette consonne s'aligne avec les autres membres de la série des fricatives phonologiques, bien que ces derniers soient par ailleurs sourds phonétiquement. C'est pourquoi son identité fricative ne provient pas d'un rapport parallèle au reste de la série. Ni une liste de traits pertinents, ni un tableau traditionnel ne peuvent illustrer cette différence. Bref, cela prouve une nouvelle fois comment cette méthode modélise les étapes de l'analyse même du fonctionnaliste.

2.4. LE BENGALI. Le schéma du bengali, une autre langue indienne (**Figure 6**), peut sembler très complexe à première vue, mais en réalité il est très simple et il ne contient pas les difficultés des figures précédentes. Il offre cependant l'occasion de voir le résultat d'une opposition ternaire (sonore – mi-sonore – sourd) : un prisme triangulaire. C'est pourquoi je l'inclus ici, pour clore cette section.

3. CONCLUSION. L'objectif ultime de cet article est de proposer à la phonologie fonctionnelle les bases d'une méthode permettant de moderniser la représentation visuelle des systèmes phonologiques, dépassant ainsi le vieux débat autour du tableau traditionnel. En effet, la 3D nous confère un certain nombre d'avantages substantiels. Tout d'abord, non seulement il a été démontré comment elle illustre les relations étroites d'opposition entre les phonèmes d'un système, mais celle-ci capture sans problème *toutes* ces relations. Les notions de symétrie et de case vide, artefacts d'une représentation trop spatialisée sur papier, sont par le fait même écartées. De plus, cette visualisation solidifie l'analyse phonologique

<sup>8</sup> Le trait vélaire assimile le trait glottal puisqu'ils font office, dans leur ensemble, de l'ordre le plus reculé dans la cavité buccale.

en explicitant chaque étape de l'exercice du linguiste qui doit établir les traits pertinents. On aboutit ainsi à une transparence jamais atteinte auparavant. Enfin, la 3D demeure le seul type de représentation qui révèle formellement l'organisation logique distincte des traits d'ordres et de séries.

Il ne faut pas non plus manquer de signaler combien la somme de ces avantages concourt à si bien concrétiser la différence entre la phonétique et la phonologie, ce qui confère évidemment une supériorité pédagogique non négligeable à la 3D, dont même le non-phonologue peut profiter. En effet, alors que le tableau phonétique est le résultat d'un simple classement, le système phonologique illustré par la 3D est le produit d'une analyse et il n'est réalisable qu'en tant que tel. Personne ne s'étonnera alors du fait que la meilleure manière d'expliquer un point de vue distinct reste, bien sûr, de le schématiser différemment en conséquence.

À la lumière de ces résultats, il faut s'interroger sur les raisons pour lesquelles on n'a pas, à ce jour, embrassé davantage une telle méthode, nonobstant les essais isolés. Je crois qu'il n'en dépendait que de limites pratiques et techniques. Or, avec les développements informatiques d'aujourd'hui, toute retenue de ce côté ne se justifie plus. Conséquemment, il faut aspirer à créer un véritable objet 3D informatisé et maniable, permettant de visualiser le système dans tous ses angles possibles afin de nous affranchir totalement du papier. Par le fait même, cela rend très accessible le genre de manipulation nécessitée par la **Figure 4** par rapport à la **Figure 3** quand le linguiste doit, à l'intention d'un article comme celui-ci, présenter une version statique lisible d'un schéma 3D complexe.

Bien qu'un tel outil informatique d'exploitation des données fasse partie intégrante de mes objectifs à réaliser en ce domaine, la tâche à accomplir auparavant reste encore formidable. Tout d'abord, il faut éclaircir absolument le traitement des voyelles. Ensuite, il serait utile d'étudier les patrons géométriques qui émergent de l'application répétée de cette méthode à de très nombreux systèmes, afin d'automatiser le plus possible la réalisation informatique des objets 3D. En outre, il faut penser à peut-être raffiner l'illustration des arêtes afin de faciliter la lecture des figures. Finalement, il faut tester ce modèle en phonologie diachronique.



## RÉFÉRENCES

- AKAMATSU, TSUMOTU. 1978. On the notion of the mark in phonology. In *Actes du 4<sup>e</sup> colloque international de linguistique fonctionnelle - Oviedo 26-30 Juillet, 1977*, 141-45.
- . 1992. *Essentials of functional phonology*. SPILL n° 16. Louvain-La-Neuve: Peeters.
- HERVEY, SÁNDOR. 1984. Phoneme-tables revisited. *La linguistique* 20:133-43.
- MARTIN, PIERRE. 1997. *Manuel de phonologie fonctionnelle*. Québec: CIRAL, Université Laval.
- MARTINET, ANDRÉ. 2000[1938]. La phonologie. *La linguistique* 36:257-82.

- MCCALLA, KIM I. 1983. On distinctive features and phoneme tables, with special reference to the English consonants. *La linguistique* 19:55–70.
- MULDER, JAN W. F. 1978. Phoneme-tables and the functional principle. *La linguistique* 14:3–27.
- ROCCA, IGGY. 1994. *Generative phonology*. New York: Routledge.
- TCHEU, SOC-KIOU. 1967. La neutralisation et le consonantisme coréen. *La linguistique* 2:85–97.
- THOMAS, JACQUELINE M. C. 1963. *Le parler ngbaka de Bokanga. Phonologie, morphologie, syntaxe*. Paris: Mouton & Co.
- TROUBETZKOY, N. S. 1986. *Principes de phonologie*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- WALTER, HENRIETTE. 1982. Pourquoi des tableaux phonologiques? Application aux consonnes de l'arabe libanais. *La linguistique* 18:21–31.





## HYPOTAXIS AND MODAL RESPONSIBILITY

WILLIAM C. SPRUIELL  
*Central Michigan University*

LINGUISTS, POLITICIANS, AND SMALL CHILDREN have long known that one can try to shift responsibility by restructuring a message. “I ate all the cookies” or “My deregulation bill has triggered an economic crisis” suddenly become less guilt-inducing when converted to “The cookies were all eaten” or “An economic crisis has occurred.” The utility of the passive construction in this kind of subterfuge has been noted at least since Orwell’s 1946 essay on political language, but—as in the case of “has occurred”—the passive is not the only means available for shifting the degree of apparent responsibility borne by participants in an event. Speakers can also manipulate the degree to which information in an utterance is positioned as open to debate, and hence encode responsibility as part of what’s being asserted (“Athelwulf broke the vase”) or, instead, as background information to contextualize the main assertion (“I was angry because of Athelwulf’s breaking of the vase”). Just as one can dodge responsibility with a passive, one can foist it onto others with the proper linguistic maneuvering.

1. INTRODUCTION. Asserted information is subject to direct and simple contradiction, while material presented as out of the bounds of debate has to be unpacked before it can be addressed. In English, one of the minimal requirements if information is to be subject to a simple contradiction is that it be presented in a clausal structure with a Subject and Finite marker—a clause-like structure without these, e.g., an infinitive or gerund, is presented as not open to debate (hence the role of such structures in discussions of presupposition):<sup>1</sup>

A: Athelwulf has stopped beating his wife.

B: No he hasn’t

\*No he didn’t

Wait—he never beat her to begin with.

---

<sup>1</sup> Here, as well as elsewhere in the paper, I am using terms from Systemic Functional Linguistics. The Finite marker is the first auxiliary, if one is present—in short, the anchor point for negation. The Finite is considered to be in a portmanteau realization with the verb form in the case of simple past or simple present verbs, although negation requires that it be realized separately (via what used to be called *do*-support). The Subject and the Finite together constitute an element called the MOOD in sfl (the small caps used for this term are in keeping with SFL usage). Simple contradictions involve a polarity marker (“no”) along with a reversed-polarity version of the MOOD of the original assertion, with a pronoun indexing the original Subject (cf. Halliday & Matthiessen 2004:111–20).

The presence of a Subject and a Finite—a MOOD—is a necessary condition for the information to be presented as “in play,” but it isn’t a sufficient one. Restrictive (“defining”) relative clauses have a MOOD element, but like gerunds and infinitives, they are difficult to contradict without unpacking:

A: The car that Bjarki sold you was stolen.

B: No it wasn’t.

\*No he didn’t

Wait—Bjarki didn’t sell me that car; he just loaned it to me.

Relative clauses of this type are embedded—they are understood as providing information about an element in a nominal group, rather than as presenting information that is put into direct relation with the meaning of the superordinate clause as a whole. Even non-embedded finite clauses may vary in the degree to which they are perceived as easily contradictable. Obviously, independent declarative clauses position information as negotiable, but the status of subordinate clauses, for example, is not as clear.<sup>2</sup> Martin (1992) grouped all hypotactic clauses together with embedded clauses in his MOOD network in *English Text*, but went on to point out that their status was far from resolved:

Hypotactically dependent clauses may turn out to be better taken from a discourse perspective as an intermediate class (between embedded and independent clauses)—quantitative studies might well show them to be more negotiable than embedded clauses, though less likely to be responded to than independent ones (41).

In an analysis later in the same work, Martin adopts the position that “...while hypotactically dependent clauses are still negotiable, their MOOD element is less likely to be replayed<sup>3</sup> than that of a [superordinate] clause, and their Subject can accordingly be considered less at risk than those of ranking [superordinate] clauses” (486).

It is natural, given this kind of potential variability in clause status, to want to devise some way of *measuring* negotiability. From a theory-external (or at least, theory-ecumenical) standpoint, the degree to which information is presented as negotiable has consequences for the analysis of texts as political and social instruments; there are marked real-world effects of shifts in positioning.<sup>4</sup> For theorists working within SFL, the exact nature of the linkage between how the MOOD is *defined*, and its negotiability status, is a relevant issue. If the MOOD is defined partly in terms of its attribution of responsibility to the Subject (hence the term “modal responsibility”), then non-negotiable clauses may not

<sup>2</sup> I am using “subordinate clause” in its more restricted sense, i.e., as referring only to dependent adverbial clauses.

<sup>3</sup> “Replayed” in this sense does not entail an exact repetition, but rather one in which a pronoun might be substituted for a full-NP subject and a *do*-form for a simple verb; e.g., “it did” for “the door closed.”

<sup>4</sup> “Leading questions” wouldn’t be forbidden in initial testimony in U.S. courts if no one thought they had an effect.

have MOODs in the normal sense, even if they have Subjects and Finites; conversely, the MOOD might instead be seen as the element which can, but need not always, carry the force of negotiability.<sup>5</sup>

From an empirical standpoint, the optimal way to move towards a means of measuring the negotiability of clauses is to use exactly the type of corpus study Martin advocates. Frequency of short, direct contradictions, affirmations, or check responses to various clause types could be used as a measure of the negotiability of those types. Introspective judgments by native speakers are problematic; the line between what we think we should say and what we think we *can* say is all too often blurred. The clearest sign of full negotiability is a short-form response, however, and those are relatively rare in written corpora (and this author has little experience with spoken corpora). The pilot study described below is an attempt to determine the utility and meaningfulness of a technique for measuring negotiability that constitutes an intermediate measure; it moves beyond introspection and is relatively easy to apply, but cannot be considered in any sense as a replacement of a full corpus study.

It should be noted at the outset that the approach used is based on the following three assumptions, and is thus valid only to the extent that they are:

1. In a dialog, attempting to react to a clause that presents information as non-negotiable as if it is readily negotiable will be perceived as a lapse in coherence.
2. If the situation is one in which one might think the other speaker isn't listening, one could easily attribute the coherence lapse to a lack of attention ("Oh, he wasn't listening").
3. Short-form contradictions ("No it isn't"), agreements ("Yes, it is"), or checks ("It is?") are only appropriate for readily negotiable clauses.

2. METHOD. Since there are multiple factors that affect the perception of a discourse as coherent or not, some method of eliminating factors other than negotiability had to be used. Subjects (college undergraduates who were in linguistics classes, but who had not had any material on negotiability) were given surveys in which they were asked to judge the extent to which one speaker was "paying attention" to another using Likert-scale responses ranging from 1 (no attention) to 5 (full attention; see Appendix A). The surveys described a scene in which it would be reasonable to assume that the second speaker might or might not be listening to the first (one is portrayed as watching television). There were two forms of the survey; each respondent received only one of the two forms. Four of the twelve questions on the survey presented items in which the second speaker was directly reacting to a clause in the first speaker's sentence, with the forms differing in *which* of the two clauses was reacted to. Each of these four contained a subordinate clause as one of the two clauses (the [A] responses were seen by one group of students, while the other group saw only [B]).

<sup>5</sup> The relation between the definition of the MOOD and its negotiability was the subject of a discussion that occurred on the SYSFLING listserv from 11 Oct. 2007 to 17 Oct. 2007, and was one of the motivations for this study. I am grateful to the list membership for outlining the positions involved.

- Q2 Bob: Did you take down the number when Mary called?  
 [A] John: No she didn't.  
 [B] John: No I didn't.
- Q4 Bob: I think we're meeting in the library because the classroom building is closed today.  
 [A] John: No it's not  
 [B] John: No we're not
- Q7 Bob: After Josh made pizza the other night, several people got sick.  
 [A] John: No he didn't  
 [B] John: No they didn't.
- Q8 Bob: I made spinach dip for the party, although Mary probably won't eat it.  
 [A] John: Yes she will.  
 [B] John: You did?

Obviously, there are potential confounding factors—in question 8, for example, it might seem odd under some circumstances to question whether or not Bob actually made spinach dip (it's not as if the respondent knows if Bob has a reputation as a horrible cook or not). If a clause's grammatical status as independent or dependent is one of the primary factors in determining its negotiability, however, one would expect that reacting to information in the independent clause would *always* seem more coherent than reacting to information in the subordinate clause. If subordinate status doesn't rule out negotiability, on the other hand, there is more room for additional factors to compress the difference between the two types, or eliminate it in some cases.

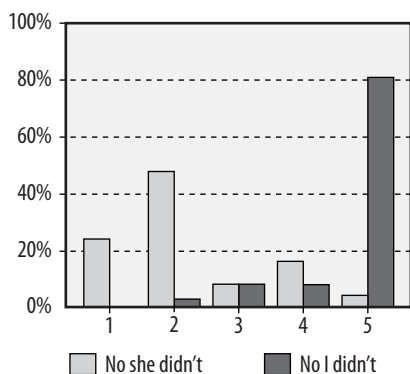
Because Question 4 can be analyzed as having "I think" as a matrix clause, an additional item was used to gauge respondents' reactions to the "I think \_\_\_\_" construction itself ("I think" is typically treated as a stance-marker rather than as a full matrix clause, but establishing that respondents didn't treat it as the main assertion seemed advisable):

- Q11 Bob: I think that movie was a total disaster.  
 [A] John: No you don't  
 [B] John: No it wasn't

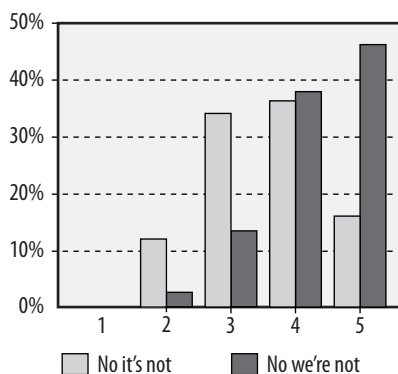
The remaining items on the form were present only as distractors, so that respondents would not fall into a pattern of always expecting a contradiction, agreement, or check.

3. RESULTS. Of the respondents who returned surveys ( $n = 62$ ), 25 filled out Form A and 37 Form B. **Figures 1–5** display responses in terms of the *percentage* giving that particular Likert response for that form—for example, in **Figure 1**, 80% of those filling out Form B ("No I didn't") assigned it a 5, while 45% of those filling out Form A ("No she didn't") assigned it a 2. No question produced completely non-overlapping responses—there were no "pure" examples; variation was primarily in degree of overlap and location of "peak" responses.

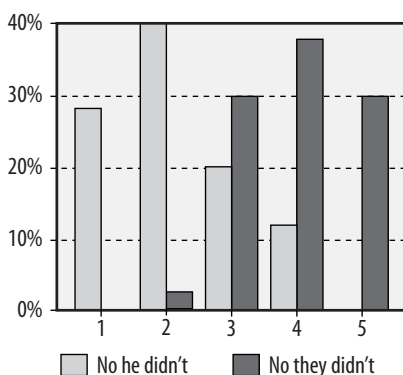
Responses on the A and B forms appeared to diverge more sharply in questions 2, 7, and 11 than they did in 4 and 8. These are nonparametric data, and that fact along with the



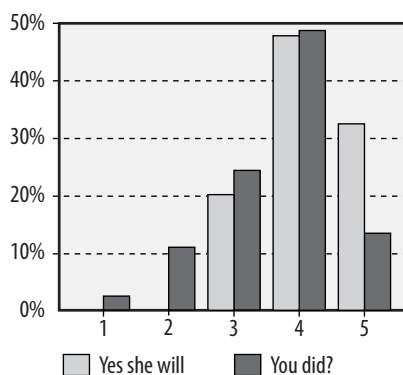
**Figure 1.** Responses to Q2, "Did you take down the number when Mary called?"



**Figure 2.** Responses to Q4, "I think we're meeting in the library because the classroom building is closed today" (right).



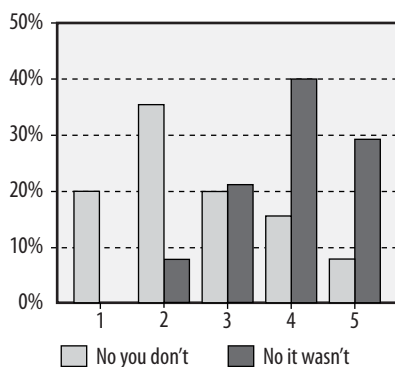
**Figure 3.** Responses to Q7, "After Josh made pizza the other night, several people got sick."



**Figure 4.** Responses to Q8, "I made spinach dip for the party, although Mary probably won't eat it."

limited number of responses rules out many statistical tests that could otherwise be used to determine whether the differences in response patterns are significant. The Komogorov-Smirnov 2-sample test was used to determine the probability that the A and B responses could have been drawn from the same population sample. The responses on forms A vs. those on B appear to be significantly distinct for questions 2 ( $z = 2.977$ , sig.<sup>6</sup>.000), 7 ( $z = 2.533$ , sig.000), and 11 ( $z = 1.850$ , sig. 002), bordering on significant but not to threshold on 4 ( $z = 1.228$ , sig. 098), and nonsignificant for 8 ( $z = .714$ , sig. 688).

<sup>6</sup> Asymptotic 2-tailed



**Figure 5.** Responses to Q11, “I think that movie was a total disaster.”

4. DISCUSSION. The survey addressed negotiability through perceptions of coherence, and perceptions of coherence through judgments of whether a speaker was “paying attention” or not. The fact that there was a degree of overlap in responses to forms A and B may partly be due to this approach, in that if someone repeats part of what you just said in a reply, even if the reply is quite off-track there’s a sense in which you might think the speaker heard part of your original utterance. Respondents approaching the question as one of “is there any evidence that John heard Bob” instead of “is John really replying to what Bob intended” would thus be likely to give John the benefit of the doubt, and raise the score by a point or two. This effect should apply across all subjects, however, not just the ones who filled out one form or the other—it may account for spread, but not for differences in where the peak responses fall.

The difference in response patterns, to the extent that they are significant, does appear to indicate differences between classes of subordinate clauses—temporal clauses (“when,” “after”) appear to position information as assumed more strongly than do clauses with “because” and much more strongly than those with “although” (the use of “although” with the same intonation pattern as “however” in colloquial spoken English may be causally related to this). The latter case appears negotiable enough that when compared to an odd response to the main-clause information, as in question 8, the although-clause approaches equal negotiability. The pattern in 11, while not showing as much of a split as the author initially expected, appears to support treating “I think” as something other than the main assertion in that sentence, and thus similarly in question 4.

These results are in line what might be expected on the basis of native-speaker intuition. That is not necessarily a bad thing, of course—in a sense, the fact that a measurement device yields results that conform to what was already expected raises the probability that the device isn’t measuring something radically different from what was intended, although it by no means firmly establishes such. This pilot study did not control for position of the subordinate clause relative to the main clause, nor did it use a wide variety of subordinators, nor did it investigate the potential effect of demographic characteristics of subjects on perceptions of attention (e.g., whether male and female respondents evinced significant

differences in their judgments of the degree to which John was paying attention); these are all directions for further study.



## REFERENCES

- HALLIDAY, M.A.K. & I.M. Matthiesen. 2004. *An introduction to Functional Grammar*. New York: Arnold.
- MARTIN, J.R. 1992. *English text: System and structure*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- ORWELL, GEORGE. 1946[2004]. Politics and the English language. [http://orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e\\_polit](http://orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit). Accessed 16 June, 2009.



## APPENDIX A: SURVEY FORMS

Code #: \_\_\_\_\_ ← Write this number on your Consent Form

### Directions

In the following survey, you'll be presented with pairs of sentences that represent turns in a conversation—Bob says the first sentence, and John responds with the second. Imagine that you're not entirely sure whether John is paying attention or not—he's watching television, for example. Based on John's response, how *well* do you think he's paying attention? Each of the sentence pairs is followed by a "1 to 5" scale like the one below; circle the number you think is most appropriate for that sentence pair:

Little/no attention      1      2      3      4      5      Full attention

For example, here are two exchanges that fall on the extremes:

Bob: I put the garbage out by the street.

John: Ducks are weird, when you really think about it.

Little/no attention      ①      2      3      4      5      Full attention

Bob: I put the garbage out by the street.

John: Thanks! Just wait on the recycling, though—they pick that up tomorrow.

Little/no attention      1      2      3      4      ⑤      Full attention

[Form A]

Bob: Am I supposed to pay the power bill this month?

John: Yep, you most definitely are.

1.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: Did you take down the number when Mary called?

John: No she didn't.

2.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I wonder if I can use this non-stick iron to make French toast...

John: No!!! Jeez!! I wonder if science can use medication to make you sane.

3.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I think we're meeting in the library because the classroom building is closed today.

John: No it's not

4.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I think I'll put the scissors up higher, since my two-year-old niece is visiting later.

John: Good idea.

5.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I wonder how many pages I have to read tonight.

John: Hey, it's not a rerun.

6.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: After Josh made pizza the other night, several people got sick.

John: No he didn't.

7.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I made spinach dip for the party, although Mary probably won't eat it.

John: Yes she will.

8.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: There's no milk in the refrigerator.

John: Yes, I did.

9.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: We need to get that air-conditioner fixed before summer.

John: It's broken?

10.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
-----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------



Bob: I think that movie was a total disaster.

John: No you don't.

11.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
-----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: Dude, I think it's your turn to do the dishes.

John: No it's not.

12.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
-----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

### [Form B]

Bob: Am I supposed to pay the power bill this month?

John: I've been turning the lights off.

1.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: Did you take down the number when Mary called?

John: No, I didn't.

2.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I wonder if I can use this non-stick iron to make French toast...

John: Who's French?

3.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I think we're meeting in the library because the classroom building is closed today.

John: No we're not

4.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I think I'll put the scissors up higher, since my two-year-old niece is visiting later.

John: Turns out my ankle is just sprained.

5.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I wonder how many pages I have to read tonight.

John: Oh, about four hundred.

6.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: After Josh made pizza the other night, several people got sick.

John: No they didn't.

7.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I made spinach dip for the party, although Mary probably won't eat it.

John: You did?

8.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: There's no milk in the refrigerator.  
John: Yeah there is—it's behind the orange juice.

9.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: We need to get that air-conditioner fixed before summer.  
John: No we don't.

10.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
-----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: I think that movie was a total disaster.  
John: No it wasn't.

11.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
-----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------

Bob: Dude, I think it's your turn to do the dishes.  
John: No you don't.

12.	Little/no attention	1	2	3	4	5	Full attention
-----	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	----------------



## NINETEENTH-CENTURY GERMAN PERCEPTIONS OF LANGUAGE IN NORTH AMERICA

PATRICIA CASEY SUTCLIFFE

*German Historical Institute, Washington DC*

THERE IS AN URBAN LEGEND that the official language of the United States would have become German save for one crucial vote. In some versions, the measure failed because a statesman happened to have gone to the restroom due to indigestion.

As a Germanist, I can attest to the strength of this legend. Many new acquaintances, learning of my profession, will ask me about this, often seeking confirmation and sometimes, to their credit, expressing doubt—because it is a myth, although a very enduring one. The reality behind the myth is much more prosaic: on January 13, 1795, the US Congress merely considered a proposal to print the federal laws in German as well as English, and a motion to adjourn failed by one vote. The final vote that took place a month later actually rejected the proposal and was not recorded (Baron 2005).

I begin with this anecdote because it points immediately to two things that I think are relevant to my topic, nineteenth-century German perceptions of language in North America. First, it shows just how prevalent Germans and the German language were in North America—not only when the vote was cast toward the end of the eighteenth century, but also when the myth began to circulate in the middle of the nineteenth century. Franz von Löher, a German scholar who became acquainted with America during his travels here from 1846 to 1847, prominently misconstrued the facts in his German-language *History and Achievements of the Germans in America* in 1847 during a strong wave of German immigration (Baron 2005, Löher 1847). Both proud German Americans and patriotic xenophobes have used similar versions of the story ever since either to emphasize German contributions to American culture, as Löher did, or to express anxiety over the endangered status of English as “the” language of the United States. Second, this story reveals just how unreliable such hearsay can be. Although it ultimately derived from a true occurrence, the enduring myth is far removed from that reality and shaped by the preconceptions of those telling it. In the same way, Germans’ perceptions about language in North America in the nineteenth century were not the same as the reality of the language situation here, though they bore some resemblance to that, and they were strongly influenced by German cultural prejudices. In other words, German perceptions about language in North America were culturally constructed.

Of course, German perceptions about languages in North America were inextricably entwined with perceptions about the people who spoke them. This interrelationship places the present study in the context of a history of transnational perceptions, currently a “burgeoning” field, which takes the cultural constructedness of group perceptions as a fundamental premise (Barclay & Glaser-Schmidt 1997:7). To understand how such perceptions

are generated, the authors of *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America Since 1776* recommend applying "the tools of historical analysis," that is, examining these perceptions as much as possible from an evidentiary base. This means finding concrete documentation for representations of others in archival materials such as letters, historical newspapers, travel books and guides, and popular fictional literature. Sticking to the evidence, they argue, will invariably show that a core reality underlies perceptions, no matter how distorted these perceptions may be (Barclay & Glaser-Schmidt 1997:8).

The evidentiary base for the present study on perceptions of language is the same as for transnational perception research in general: a sampling of the personal letters that German emigrants sent home and popular fictional literature that depicts the language situation of North America; here I focus on a novel by Karl May. I have also added another level: scholarly perceptions of American languages—specifically, Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideas about American Indian languages. Barclay and his co-authors claim that transnational perceptions are a grassroots phenomenon, and that the perceptions come from below rather than from above. Interest among German elites in the circumstances of life in America and in its indigenous populations was, in part, triggered by information from emigrants, who primarily belonged to the lower echelons of society. Moreover, they claim that elite perceptions tend to be less reliable (Barclay & Glaser-Schmidt 1997:12–13). Berger, in *Amerika im XIX. Jahrhundert*, a book that analyzes the image of America in nineteenth-century German popular travel literature, maintains that the work of scholars had very little effect on popular perceptions; rather, Germans and Austrians owed their knowledge of America above all to these travel books (1999:11). Still, I wanted to add the scholarly level, first of all because Humboldt's views on American Indian languages give us a linguistic perspective lacking in the general statements of most of the letters and popular literature. Second, I wanted to test these views discounting scholarly discourse and ask whether continuities exist across the different levels, and whether such continuities came from below or whether scholarly discourse and mass opinion mutually influenced one another.

In fact, I did find continuities, which I will present in detail below, across the different levels of discourse about languages in North America that suggest some interplay among them. Specifically, all of the observers—the immigrant letter writers, popular fiction writers, and Humboldt—all looked at the language situation in the New World through the powerful lens of German Romanticism, which caused them to distort its reality in consistent ways: they believed in linguistic relativity; that is, that some languages were better than others and that they represented the intellectual abilities of those who spoke them. Thus, they believed in the inherent superiority of European languages and the inferior mental capacity of the American Indians; and they leaned toward the idea of one language for one nation, which blinded them to the real variety of American Indian languages they encountered. Moreover, I found evidence to suggest that at least some popular conceptions were shaped by scholarly discourse, so that perceptions are not necessarily as bottom-up as Barclay *et al.* assume.

GERMAN IMMIGRANT LETTERS. The urban legend about the German vote emphasizes the prevalence of German immigrants in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the

first US census of 1790, one-twelfth of the nearly four million residents of the new republic were of German descent (about 330,000),<sup>1</sup> although Pennsylvania was exceptional with thirty percent (or about 130,000) (Kamphoefner, Helbich & Sommer 1991:1).<sup>2</sup> The great concentration of Germans there caused Benjamin Franklin to complain as early as 1751 that they would overrun the colony:

Why should the Palatine Boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlements, and by herding together establish their Language and Manners to the exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglicizing them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion? (Labaree 1957–2007:234)

Franklin's anxieties about German clannishness and their refusal to acquire English are particularly striking.

Another man who would later become president of the United States acknowledged the tremendous number and impact of German immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1958, John F. Kennedy wrote of them:

Between 1830 and 1930, Germany sent six million people to the United States—more than any other nation... Almost every state in the Union profited from their intellectual and material contributions... German immigrant influence has been pervasive, in our language, in our mores, in our customs and in our basic philosophy. (quoted in Wagner 1985:vi)

Kennedy's take on German immigrants was notably more positive than Franklin's, but then, he was writing when they were no longer perceived as a threat to dominant American culture.

In fact, five million people had already emigrated from Germany to the US by the end of the nineteenth century, primarily to midwestern states and Texas. These immigrants sent over 300 million letters to Germany between 1820 and 1914, with about one-third of them personal in nature (Kamphoefner, Helbich & Sommer 1991:27). In an effort to make a sampling of these letters more accessible for research, Helbich, Kamphoefner and Sommer in 1988 edited a large volume of them, which was translated into English as *News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home* in 1991. Now, however, the Internet has made broad access to such archival materials much more feasible. I also searched letters from German immigrants in the database, *North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries and Oral Histories*, which encompasses over 100,000 pages of documents searchable by key

<sup>1</sup> The US population in the 1790 census was 3,929,214 (<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h980.html>, accessed June 8, 2008.)

<sup>2</sup> The Pennsylvania population in 1790 was 434,373 (<http://www.npg.org/states/pa.htm>, accessed June 8, 2008.)

words including countries of origin and heritage.<sup>3</sup> Finally, I looked at newspaper articles published by the Cotta Publishing House, one of the most prominent publishers in nineteenth-century Germany (Wagner 1985). Although these sources did not yield many observations on specific details of language, a number of common themes emerged that give us insight into the general perceptions in Germany about language in America.

Above all, the letters point to the great diversity of languages and cultures in the US. Most of them were European languages—I found references to Yiddish (Bruns 1988:94); Swedish, Spanish (Kamphoefner, Helbich & Sommer 1991:102); Mexican (Dressel 1954:81); Polish, French, and German, of course (Gustorf 1969:114); and Pennsylvania Dutch (Dressel 1954:7)—but the writers also noted “Indian language” (Wislizenus 1848:51, Bruns 1988:82, Dressel 1954:65), as well as an Indian sign language (Dressel 1954:65) and even a French creole (Dressel 1954:52). Interestingly, there were no references to Chinese in my sample, although Chinese immigration had become an issue of intense debate by the close of the nineteenth century, as witnessed by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Daniels 2002:2). With this veritable Babel of languages, some letter writers explicitly admired the rare linguistic genius—those immigrants who mastered many languages and could switch easily between them. In July 1836, for example, one writer described the multilingual owner of a boardinghouse in St. Louis: “Now and then, [the owner] raised up from his chairs and spoke a few Polish, German, French, and now and then English words, depending upon the language in which he was addressed” (Gustorf 1969:114).

One could get the impression that immigrants needed to know many languages to succeed in the New World. But, in fact, most letters and especially immigrant advice literature indicated that the language of the country was incontrovertibly English. Moreover, they urged would-be immigrants to master it if they hoped to do well. In his *Advice to Immigrants* of 1851, F. W. Bogen put it most plainly:

It is well known, that the English language is by far the widest-spread, and, in the political and judicial life, the only usual language in this country. Whoever does not understand nor speak English, can make no use of his knowledge and abilities, or at the most, a very limited one... I could get no employment, I was neglected, little esteemed; in fine, I felt unhappy and forlorn. But as soon as I became master of the language of my adopted country, my troubles ceased... no immigrant who seeks his true interest... ought to hesitate for a moment in his endeavors to become master of the English language as an indispensable means to that purpose. (1851:13–15).

Other writers made similar statements (e.g., Kohn 1951:104).

Parallel to the need for English, a common theme of the letters is a sense of disappointment that German was not more important in America. Many writers complained of missing German (Kohn 1951:108, Hasslock 1951:276), and even those who advocated learning English did not wish to see German discarded. Again, Bogen, in his *Advice to Immigrants*, wrote:

---

<sup>3</sup> Accessible by subscription at <http://www.alexanderstreet2.com/imldlive/>. The works that were published independently elsewhere but available in the database are listed in the references.

Having said thus much upon the importance of obtaining a thorough knowledge of the English language, the author by no means asks his countryman to renounce entirely his mother tongue, which is in reality one of the most powerful, rich and refined in the world, and one which has exercised a wonderful influence in civilizing the people, and brought to light excellent works, both in prose and poetry, and therefore deserves also in this country due care and attention. (1851:21)

However, German immigrants found it difficult to maintain their mother tongue, especially with their children. One man claimed that English was easier than German, which explained why his children did not wish to learn their parents' native language (Kamphoefner, Helbich & Sommer 1991:238). Others bemoaned the language mixing that occurred among those who did continue to speak German. A visitor to Pennsylvania in 1838 gave an example of the kind of expressions one could hear in its German-speaking counties: "Das horse ist über die fence gejumpf" (Dressel 1954:11).

As far as the Indian languages were concerned, it is telling that the writers did not refer to specific tribal languages but rather simply to "the language of the Indians" (Wislizenus 1848:51, Bruns 1988:82, Dressel 1954:65).<sup>4</sup> To be sure, most immigrants probably had little contact with Indians and did not encounter more than one tribe in their immediate surroundings. But just this way of referring to Indian languages suggests that they lumped all Indians and their languages into one large group.

In his introduction to *The Language Encounter of the Americas, 1492–1800*, Gray points out the importance of missionaries not only in gathering information about the indigenous languages of the Americas but also in laying the foundation of attitudes about these languages. In order to make the diversity of tongues consistent with the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, early missionaries viewed it as "an indication of social decay and human delinquency" (2000:9). Later, scholars of language drew upon these missionary reports for their data and transformed this Biblical idea into the hypothesis of linguistic development, wherein the American languages were assumed to represent earlier stages of human language (Jookin 2000:294), and thus earlier stages of humanity as well.

It seems that the letter writers had largely adopted this view of languages and likewise regarded the Indians and other non-European peoples as representatives of earlier, more barbaric languages and people, without, however, recognizing the diversity or complexity of their languages. Remarking on the French creole of some black workers he encountered on plantations in Mississippi and Louisiana, one German immigrant wrote that they "gibbered a language that entirely matched their apish faces" (Dressel 1954: 52). Although I could find no specific reference similarly denigrating Indian languages in my sample, I did

<sup>4</sup> To make sure that this gap did not result from my search terms, I also searched the records of people with German heritage in the immigrant database for some of the Indian tribal names, including Navajo, Apache, Ute, Delaware, Algonquian, Iroquois, and Shawnee. Of these, only the Delaware and Algonquian Indians were mentioned by name, each only once in 807 documents, without reference to their languages (Lobenstine 1920:101, Lips 1942:63, respectively). Curiously, the "Utah" Indians also receive one mention (Kautz 1978:216), which has interesting implications for my discussion of Karl May, below.

find a passage that used Indians to emphasize the lack of sophistication among the isolated populations of Kentucky—"These people appear less civilized than the American Indians" (Gustorf 1969:57)—a statement that again lumps them all together into one group. For the most part, references to Indians in the letters occurred in the context of discussing people who were killed or were living in fear of them, as one woman tellingly wrote, "I am a bit afraid of Mexico too, because there are still too many Indians living there" (Kamphoefner, Helbich & Sommer 1991:598).

The flip side of this stigmatization of Indian and creole languages, of course, was the belief that European languages were superior in form and corresponded to the more advanced civilization and intellect of its people. However, the German immigrants took it a step further: "...German immigrants... regarded themselves and their home country as the apex of culture and civilization" (Wagner 1985:ix). This attitude was apparent in Bogen's remark about the "rich and refined" and "civilizing" German language above, and other letters bear this out as well. A woman ship passenger on her way to America, for example, looked forward to opportunities to speak German, "our own dear language, so pure and uncorrupted," with fellow countrymen (Hasslock 1951:276). Perhaps this explains, in part, why Karl May, to whom we now turn, always made his Western heroes "German in their innermost hearts," regardless of their characterization in the novel or what languages they spoke (Berger 1999:80).<sup>5</sup>

KARL MAY'S TRAVEL NARRATIVE *THE TREASURE OF SILVER LAKE*. Berger argues that German travel books, especially popular novels, were the primary source of information that the average German citizen had about life in America. This travel literature achieved its peak in the first half of the nineteenth century, when it was read more widely than newspapers (Berger 1999: 11). The mass press did not emerge until the latter half of the century (Gassert & Hoderberg 2006). Of the many authors of popular narratives set in America, I chose to focus on May (1842–1912), not for the authenticity of his tales, which were often rather far-fetched, but because he was the most widely read. Still popular among German youth today, May's works have gone through more editions than any German publication except for the Bible and certain state-sponsored propaganda titles (Berger 1999:78). As such, his writing both mirrored and projected the German image of America (*ibid*).

Although May finally traveled to America in 1908, he had no first-hand knowledge of the country when he wrote most of his Western novels, including *The Treasure of Silver Lake*, which was published in fifty episodes in the serial *Der gute Kamerad* from 1890 to 1891. Rather, he based his image of the American West on that of his predecessors, such as the Austrian-American author Charles Sealsfield (the pen name of Karl Postl, 1793–1864), and James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851), who popularized the Western genre in the 1820s (Folsom 1979:6). Despite the tall nature of May's tales, he placed great emphasis on their authenticity. In 1894, he began to claim that he himself was Old Shatterhand, the highest-ranking hero in his novels, and that he had actually experienced all of the adventures he depicted in them. In this same period, he also underscored this by changing the designation

<sup>5</sup> Translation mine.



of his texts from *Reiseromane* 'travel novels' to *Reiseerzählungen* 'travel accounts' (Heermann 1988:240, Sutcliffe 1998:598).

May's quest for authenticity is important for us because it encouraged him to try to portray the language situation of the American West in some detail. In *The Treasure of Silver Lake*, May actually developed a complex system using foreign interjections, his native Saxon dialect, pidgin German, pronoun shifts, and overt narrator comments on language to represent the diversity of languages his heroes encounter without taxing his young, monolingual readers too much (Sutcliffe 1998). As a result, we have access to his perception of the languages of America, which was so influential throughout Germany.

Like the immigrant letters, May's novel presents a great variety of languages in America. There are examples of English and German, of course, but also Spanish (May 1989:48), French (276), and various dialects, including the Yankee, British, and Black varieties of English, and standard German vs. the Saxon dialect, as well as a host of Indian languages. In contrast to the immigrant letter writers, though, May did not lump all the Indian languages together but referred to a variety of them including Tonkawa (36), Timbabsche (an Indian tribe he seems to have invented, as it is only to be found in the context of May's novels) (588), Apache (590), Navajo (595) and the "Utah" Indian language (373). Moreover, May mentioned a sign language, specifically of the Utah tribe (537).<sup>6</sup> Although May got some of the facts wrong, he generally showed, with his representation of a broad variety of languages and dialects in America, a remarkable sensitivity to the problem of language as a barrier to communication in the New World, especially for one who had never been here.

Interestingly, May used the different characters' facility with languages to mark them as heroes or villains. Most of his heroes, including Old Shatterhand, Old Firehand, Tante-Droll and Hobbler-Frank, are actually ethnically German, and yet all show a great facility for languages. Old Shatterhand, the greatest among them, is essentially a linguistic genius like the owner of the boardinghouse in St. Louis we saw above: he speaks German natively, has mastered English and several of the Indian languages, including the Utah sign language (May 1989:496, 537), and can switch between them effortlessly. His linguistic genius is even more remarkable when one considers the skills he exhibits in May's Oriental novels, where he has mastered Chinese and is working on dialectal variation (Schinzel-Lang 1991:290). The villains, on the other hand, get themselves into trouble because they lack linguistic and cultural skill. "Cornel" Brinkley and his men insult an Indian chief. The narrator remarks that this cultural gaffe would certainly have led to their deaths because the chief would need to defend his honor—but they were killed by other angry Indians first (May 1989:26).

<sup>6</sup> Here we must ask ourselves what May meant by the Utah tribe, since there are six recognized tribes in Utah, one of which is called the Ute. It is likely that he meant the Ute Indian language. Not only would a German pronouncing this word according to the rules of German orthography pronounce it /'u:tə/, but I find it rather compelling that the German immigrant writer Kautz (1978:216) also referred to the Utah Indians in 1860, suggesting that this confusion of the state with the Indian tribe was widespread, at least among Germans. Indeed, even today, the idea that the state was in some way named after the tribe continues to be propagated (by the web sites <http://www.native-languages.org/utah.htm> and [http://www.uteindian.com/ute\\_tribal.htm](http://www.uteindian.com/ute_tribal.htm), accessed June 26, 2008, for example), although the theory has been rejected (d'Azevedo 1986:364–65).

Similarly, the good Indians, like the Apache chief Winnetou, speak several languages perfectly including German, whereas the bad Indians speak "pidgin" when they try to address the heroes in English (e.g., the Timbabatschen warriors talking with the heroes, 586–88) and otherwise exhibit a lack of cultural awareness. Chief Great Wolf of the difficult Utah tribe proves himself a fool for believing that English is the only language of the white men. He is stunned when the heroes begin to converse in German (421).

May's presentation of languages in America thus reinforces many of the impressions from the immigrants' letters. His ethnically German heroes represent "utterly assimilated, successful emigrants who have not lost their German roots" (Sutcliffe 1998:603)—thus presenting a model for other emigrants. They appealed to May's compatriots' pride in their language and culture and assuaged their fears that German would necessarily be lost in an American environment. Like the immigrants, May's heroes also long for their homeland. Tante-Droll and Hobble-Frank, for example, two of the Saxon dialect speakers, fantasize toward the end of the novel about returning to Saxony once they have secured the treasure (580). At the same time, the heroes all speak English, even with one another before they discover their common heritage when Old Shatterhand joins the group halfway through the novel. Thus, English effectively functions as "the" language of the country—the default language for all situations when no other one is called for.

The difference between May and the immigrants, however, is in May's presentation of the Indian languages. While May, too, exalts German language and culture, he does not put all the Indians nor all the Europeans into the same basket but differentiates between distinct good and bad Indian tribes, as well as good and bad white men. He does not judge people by the language they speak or their race, as the immigrants did, but by their ability to master and to be sensitive to a variety of languages and cultures. Moreover, May's interest in the diversity of Indian languages extends to the point that he provides a classification for the Utah Indian language as "a branch of the Shoshonian part of the Sonoran language family" (373). Again, this information is not exactly correct; Shoshonean and Sonoran Indian languages today are two divisions within the Uto-Aztecan family rather than Shoshonean being part of the Sonoran family.<sup>7</sup> But May's inclusion of this information demonstrates an awareness for the scholarly work on American Indian languages that was just beginning to appear in his day.

It was not until 1880 that John Wesley Powell published the first formal classification of Indian languages (Powell 1880). Powell distinguished a Shoshonean family of languages but not a Sonoran one (Powell 1891:108). But in 1891, Daniel Brinton, an American anthropologist, established the Sonoran branch as a variety distinct from Shoshonean.<sup>8</sup> It seems unlikely that May would have known this specific work, especially as it was published in

<sup>7</sup> "Uto-Aztecan Languages," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9074562/Uto-Aztecan-languages>, accessed June 10, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> See "Uto-Aztecan Languages," *Encyclopedia Britannica*. This article cites Daniel G. Brinton, *The American Race: A Linguistic Classification and Ethnographic Description of the Native Tribes of North and South America* (New York: NDC Hodges, 1891).

the same year as the latter parts of his novel.<sup>9</sup> But there can be no doubt that he was looking to scholarly information, either directly or filtered through other sources, to fill in the linguistic details. Thus, he must have relied, to some extent, on the foundation laid by pioneers of American Indian language study, foremost among them Wilhelm von Humboldt.

**WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT AND THE AMERICAN LANGUAGES.** Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), the famous Prussian statesman and educational reformer, is perhaps best known to linguists for his final tour de force, *On Language: The Diversity of Human Language-Structure and its Influence on the Mental Development of Mankind* published posthumously in 1836 (Humboldt 1988).<sup>10</sup> This lengthy title already points to one of his most fundamental and consistent principles—that the structure of one’s language affects the way one thinks. Importantly, these patterns of thought, Humboldt believed, were collective, each belonging to a particular nation with its own language. As he wrote of the emerging field, comparative philology:

The *comparative study of languages*, the exact establishment of the manifold ways in which innumerable peoples resolve the same task of language formation that is laid upon them as men, loses all higher interest if it does not cleave to the point at which language is connected with the shaping of the *nation’s mental power*. (Humboldt 1988:21)

Humboldt’s linguistic relativity at the time made him a pioneer in researching the languages of supposedly barbaric and savage peoples, including the indigenous Americans. Prominent contemporaries, such as Chateaubriand, ridiculed him for his enduring interest in these native populations. As an adherent of the Enlightenment philosophy of universal grammar, wherein individual languages were viewed as arbitrary tools of communication whose form was inconsequential to the message, Chateaubriand could not imagine a less rewarding endeavor (Trabant 1994:12–13).

Humboldt’s occupation with American languages began in conjunction with his brother Alexander’s research expedition to the Americas from 1799 to 1804 (Thierner-Sachse 1994:257). A natural scientist, Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859) collected data on the geography and life forms in the Americas that he spent the rest of his life processing. The grand work resulting from these efforts, *Cosmos*, remained incomplete despite the five volumes published before his death (1845–58). Alexander asked Wilhelm to write an essay on the languages of the American continent for inclusion in this work. In 1812, during one period of intense work on the project, Wilhelm wrote to an acquaintance: “I am busy with

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting, however, that May brings this classification in late, more than half way through the book, although the Utah Indians first appear much earlier.

<sup>10</sup> This work has been translated with various titles, but this is an authoritative translation by Peter Heath. The German title is *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluß auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts*.

a treatise on the American languages for my brother, which he wishes to incorporate into his work" (quoted in Ringmacher 1994:36).

Alexander was crucial to Wilhelm's studies of American languages not only for giving him this initial impetus, but also for providing him with copious materials on the populations he had encountered that were not widely available (Mueller-Vollmer 1993:30–31). Moreover, Alexander's connections and high reputation among rulers and scholars in America proved indispensable to Wilhelm over the next decades as he used these contacts to secure more materials for his work on American languages (*ibid* 32). Finally, Alexander and Wilhelm shared a *Weltanschauung*—a similar way of looking at the world and dealing with the empirical data they obtained. Alexander's description of his philosophy of science in *Cosmos* applies equally to his brother's: "Nature is, for the thinking observer, unity in its abundance, the connection of the variety of forms and combination, a living whole. The most important result of physical research through the senses is therefore this: to find the unity in the variety..." (quoted in Bitterli 1991:472, translation mine).

On this model, Wilhelm had planned to write a comprehensive treatise on the American languages providing a unified conception of them followed by grammars and lexica of several individual languages. Wilhelm began this project in earnest during his appointment as the Prussian envoy in Rome with materials obtained from Lorenzo Hervás, an ex-Jesuit abbot who had been appointed the prefect of the Quirinal Library there (Trabant 1994:15, Mueller-Vollmer 1993:30). Although he repeatedly attempted to write this work up through 1826, he ultimately gave up (Trabant 1994:15). He did produce some grammars—his Mexican grammar, a grammar of Nahuatl, is perhaps the most complete, the materials on it in his papers having recently been collected into a coherent volume (Humboldt 1994). But he failed, Trabant argues, precisely because he was trying to press all the American languages into a generalizing mold that the facts just did not allow (1994:23). That is, like the immigrants before and after him, he tended to lump all the Indian languages together.

A couple of Humboldt's generalizations about American languages survive in his papers. In 1812, he composed an essay that set out his agenda for his American project, "Essai sur les langues du nouveau continent" (Trabant 1994:11). The second surviving document is, curiously, an English translation of a lecture on "the verb in American languages" Humboldt delivered at the Berlin Academy in 1823 (Trabant 1994:17).<sup>11</sup> The generalizations derive from his belief that the verb is "the most important part of speech" (quoted in Trabant 1994:18), the part that most clearly exhibits "the true creative act of the spirit," synthesis (quoted in Trabant 1994:20, here translation mine). Humboldt noted that the grammatical category of the verb was insufficiently developed in American languages, so that the pronouns become the structural center of the languages and whole sentences merge into single words (Trabant 1994:21). Unable to overcome his Romantic prejudice of the superiority of

<sup>11</sup> The lecture was not published, but Daniel G. Brinton, who published the English translation in 1885 (and who, by the way, is same American anthropologist whose classification of the Uto-Aztec languages bears such a striking resemblance to Karl May's description of the Utah language), claimed that he found the manuscript in the Royal Library at Berlin (Trabant 1994:17). However, Mueller-Vollmer, who compiled an annotated bibliography of Humboldt's papers (Mueller-Vollmer 1993), has been unable to locate the manuscript (Trabant 1994:18).

Indo-European language structure, Humboldt believed that these structural characteristics of American languages resulted in a lack of clear thinking among their speakers. As he wrote in the presentation on the American verb:

Nations richly endowed in mind and sense will have an instinct for such correct divisions; the incessant moving to and fro of elementary parts of speech will be distasteful to them; they will seek true individuality in the words they use; therefore they will connect them firmly, they will not accumulate too much in one, and they will only leave that connected which is so in thought, and not merely in usage or habit. (quoted in Trabant 1994:19)

It is important that Humboldt gave up on his America project because it suggests that he realized that the goal he had set for himself—a presentation of the “total impression” of the American languages worked out from the laws of a common analogy he discerned in them (Trabant 1994:15)—was impossible to achieve. His later work reveals his growing awareness that languages cannot be classified in the same way as natural phenomena because of their psychological and unique character (*ibid* 22). Thus, he overcame his Romantic preconceptions about American Indian languages long before the immigrants writing home about them for the rest of the nineteenth century.

CONCLUSION. The samples of nineteenth-century German perceptions about the language situation in North America I have presented here are very different in character and content, and yet they are connected by a common base of Romantic conceptions about language. Foremost, inheriting the prejudices of the missionaries who studied American Indian culture and language before them, Humboldt and the immigrants believed in linguistic relativity. May and the immigrants exalted German culture and language above all others, whereas Humboldt did the same for Indo-European. And all three adhered to the idea of a link between language and nation that predisposed them to see language as the key to understanding a culture. But these three samples call into question an exclusively bottom-up transmission of perceptions. Although Humboldt’s interest in American languages was motivated by his brother’s trip, it far exceeded that of the immigrant letter writers, and his realization of the true diversity of American Indian languages preceded theirs. Moreover, the groundwork of empirical knowledge he helped establish provided material used to create popular notions about the American Indian languages, as we saw with May’s use of information on the classification of American Indian languages that one of Humboldt’s followers wrote. Thus, some top-down shaping of perceptions clearly occurred.

It would be worthwhile to pursue all three types of perceptions and the interactions among them further—to determine exactly what scholarly ideas were taken up in the popular press and what sources May and other popular authors consulted, for example, and to expand the scope of the samples to include newspaper reports, more examples of popular literature, and different linguistic scholars. But this preliminary comparison, I think, can give linguists some hope that they can influence popular opinion, e.g., on the English-only

debate that continues today more than two hundred years after Congress voted not to print federal laws in German.



## REFERENCES

- BARCLAY, D. E. & E. GLASER-SCHMIDT. 1997. *Transatlantic images and perceptions: Germany and America since 1776*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- BARON, DENNIS. 2005. The legendary English-only vote of 1795. <http://www.pbs.org/speak/seatosea/officialamerican/englishonly>, accessed February 23, 2009.
- BERGER, GOTTFRIED. 1999. *Amerika im XIX. Jahrhundert: die Vereinigten Staaten im Spiegel zeitgenössischer deutschsprachiger Reiseliteratur*. Vienna: Molden.
- BITTERLI, URS. 1991. *Die Entdeckung Amerikas: von Kolumbus bis Alexander von Humboldt*. Munich: C. H. Beck.
- BOGEN, F. W. 1851. Advice to immigrants. In *The German in America*, ed. Don Heinrich Tolzmann, 7–30. New York: B. H. Greene.
- BRUNS, JETTE. 1988. *Hold dear, as always: Jette, a German immigrant life in letters*, trans. Adolph E. Schroeder, ed. Carla Schulz Geisberg. Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press.
- D'AZEVEDO, WARREN L. 1986. Great Basin. In *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 11, ed. William C. Sturtevant, 364–65. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution.
- DANIELS, ROGER. 2002. Immigration. *Encyclopedia of American foreign policy*. [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_gx5215/is\\_2002/ai\\_n19132417](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_gx5215/is_2002/ai_n19132417), accessed February 23, 2009.
- DRESSSEL, GUSTAV. 1954. *Gustav Dressel's Houston journal: Adventures in North America and Texas, 1837–1841*, ed. and trans. Max Freund. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- FOLSOM, JAMES K., ed. 1979. *The Western: A collection of critical essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- GASSERT, PHILIPP & CHRISTINE VON HODENBERG. 2006. Media, politics and the transatlantic ambivalences of modernity. Lecture at the German Historical Institute, Washington DC, December 7, 2006.
- GRAY, EDWARD G. 2000. Introduction. In Gray & Fiering, 1–11.
- & NORMAN FIERING, eds. 2000. *The language encounter in the Americas, 1492–1800: A collection of essays*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- GUSTORF, FREDERICK JULIUS. 1969. *The uncorrupted heart: Journals and letters of Frederick Julius Gustorf 1800–1845*, ed. and trans. Fred Gustorf, trans. Gisela Gustorf. Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press.
- HASSLOCK, THEKLA DOMBOIS. 1951. Diary of Thekla Dombois Hasslock, January, 1849. *Tennessee historical quarterly* 10:249–81.
- HEERMANN, CHRISTIAN. 1988. *Der Mann, der Old Shatterhand war: Eine Karl-May Biographie*. Berlin: Verlag der Nation.



- HUMBOLDT, WILHELM VON. 1994. *Mexikanische Grammatik*, ed. Manfred Ringmacher. Paderborn: F. Schöningh.
- . 1988. *On language: The diversity of human language-structure and its influence on the mental development of mankind*, trans. Peter L. Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- JOOKEN, LIEVE. 2000. Descriptions of American Indian word forms in colonial missionary grammars. In Gray and Fiering, 293–309.
- KAMPHOEFFNER, WALTER D., W. J. HELBICH & ULRIKE SOMMER. 1991. *News from the land of freedom: German immigrants write home*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- KAUTZ, AUGUST VALENTINE. 1978. Diary of August Valentine Kautz, July, 1860. In *Nothing worthy of note transpired today: The Northwest journals of August V. Kautz*, ed. Gary Fuller Reese. Tacoma WA: Tacoma Public Library.
- KOHN, ABRAHAM. 1951. Diary of Abraham Kohn, September, 1842. *American Jewish Archives* 3(3):81–111.
- LABAREE, LEONARD W., ed. 1959–2007. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* 4:234. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- LIPS, EVA. 1942. *Rebirth in liberty*. New York: Flamingo.
- LOBENSTINE, WILLIAM CHRISTIAN. 1920. Diary of William Christian Lobenstine, June, 1858. In *Extracts from the diary of William C. Lobenstine*, ed. Belle Wilson Lobenstine. New York: Privately published.
- LÖHER, FRANZ VON. 1847. *Geschichte and Zustände der Deutschen in Amerika*. Cincinnati: Eggers und Wulkop.
- MAY, KARL. 1899 [1890–91]. *Der Schatz im Silbersee*. Zürich: Haffmanns Verlag.
- MUELLER-VOLLMER, KURT. 1993. *Wilhelm von Humboldts Sprachwissenschaft: Ein kommentiertes Verzeichnis des sprachwissenschaftlichen Nachlasses*. Paderborn: F. Schöningh.
- . 1994. Humboldts linguistisches Beschaffungsprogramm: Logistik und Theorie. In Zimmermann, Trabant & Mueller-Vollmer, 27–42.
- POWELL, JOHN WESLEY. 1880. *Introduction to the study of Indian languages: with words, phrases and sentences to be collected*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office.
- . 1891. *Indian linguistic families of America, north of Mexico. Seventh annual report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1885–86*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office.
- RINGMACHER, MANFRED. 1994. Einleitung. In Humboldt 1994, 1–73.
- SCHINZEL-LANG, WALTER. 1991. Fundierte Kenntnisse oder phantasievolle Ahnungslosigkeit? Die Verwendung der chinesischen Sprache durch Karl May. *Jahrbuch der Karl-May-Gesellschaft* 1991, 287–323. Hamburg: Karl-May-Gesellschaft.
- SUTCLIFFE, PATRICIA CASEY. 1998. A treasure of hidden language varieties and their meaning in Karl May's popular novel *Der Schatz im Silbersee*. *Neophilologus* 82(4):589–606.
- THIEMER-SACHSE, URSULA. 1994. Die Brüder Wilhelm und Alexander von Humboldt und Eduard Buschmann. In Zimmermann, Trabant & Mueller-Vollmer, 257–68.
- TRABANT, JÜRGEN. 1994. Ein weites Feld: Les langues des nouveau continent. In Zimmermann, Trabant & Mueller-Vollmer, 11–25.

- WAGNER, MARIA. 1985. *Was die Deutschen aus Amerika berichteten, 1828–1865*. Stuttgart: H.-D. Heinz.
- WISLIZENUS, FREDERICK ADOLPH. 1848. Diary of Frederick Adolph Wislizenus, September, 1846. In *Memoir of a Tour to Northern Mexico, Connected With Col. Doniphan's Expedition*, 141. Washington DC: Tippin & Streeper.
- ZIMMERMANN, KLAUS, JÜRGEN TRABANT & KURT MUELLER-VOLLMER. 1994. *Wilhelm von Humboldt und die amerikanischen Sprachen: Internationales Symposium des Ibero-Amerikanischen Instituts PK, 24.-26. September 1992 in Berlin*. Paderborn: F. Schöningh.





## SOME MORE READINGS OF ALICE AND THE CATERPILLAR

LUCAS VAN BUUREN

*University of Amsterdam (retired) / Linguavox, Bloemendaal*

This article is another exercise, for both author and reader, in observing and analyzing intonation and rhythm. It is a follow-up to Van Buuren (2008) which compared my own reading of the present Alice in Wonderland passage with that by William Rushton. The 35th LACUS Forum being in French Canada, and with “Language and Linguistics in North America” as its theme, it seemed appropriate to further compare a (commercially available) U.S. and a French version. By kind permission of the publishers we therefore look at and listen to the recording of this short passage by Sally Field (2000) and that by a group of French actors (1987), alternated line by line in **Sound Sample 1** (overleaf).<sup>1</sup> Both for its entertainment value and for more detailed study, purchasing the complete recordings is of course strongly recommended.

It is a curious fact that the vast majority of linguists are incapable of analyzing speech melodies—not to mention rhythmic patterns—by ear. Some, convinced it cannot be done, will get a machine to provide a (far from realistic) visual analysis instead. Most just do not bother at all, in fact restricting themselves to written language only. This seems curious since, in our early childhood, language was exclusively spoken and exclusively acquired by ear, and most of us remain very sensitive all our lives to the minutest rhythmic or pitch “oddities” in music and speech. Given a suitable framework, pitch analysis by ear is in fact quite easy and rhythmic analysis, if less easy, at least doable. It is hoped that the present material may tempt some readers to have a go at it.

1. INTERPRETING THE NOTATION. The underlying framework was summarized in a single table in Van Buuren (2008:292). Subdivided into five sections, this listed 18 prosodic SIGNS for British English, each with a FORM and a MEANING. The illustrative examples (1)–(3) may serve to cover the same ground.

In these examples the “alphabetic” notation over the text shows the SIGNS, the “dots & dashes” (d&d) below the text their prosodic FORMS. Both are in principle superfluous, shown here only to explain the prosodic notation *inside* the text. The SIGN notation is in a one-to-one relation to the d&d notation and therefore completely derivable from it. The d&d FORM notation, in its turn, is in a one-to-one relation to the (more economical, stylized) *in-line* FORM notation, and completely derivable from that. A notation of the MEANINGS does not easily suggest itself: the simplest thing to do is to memorize the single (italicized) MEANING label to be given below for each SIGN.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sound samples in this article may require Adobe Reader or Acrobat version 9 or greater for proper playback.



1.2. **PIECE DOMAIN.** Every piece takes either an F or R, and possibly a C. Again more precisely, the next three **SIGNS** are F/f, R/r and C, noted down in the examples in italicized superscript. Their domain is the piece. The **FORM** for F/f is falling or descending tune, shown by the piece-final downturns in both **FORM** notations, Its **MEANING** is *closed*, i.e. neurocognitively (Lamb 1999) blocked off from alternative pieces/ideas. The **FORM** for R/r is rising or ascending tune, shown by the piece-final upturns in the notation, its **MEANING** being: not F, i.e. options *open*. In “minor” pieces/ideas (without any *new* thoughts), as finally in (2), lower-case f/r is written. The C(alling) **SIGN** as in L+M<sup>CF</sup># ‘dinner .time. # Λ. —#, has the **FORM** Chanted level ending and the **MEANING** *routine proclamation*. It occurs repeatedly in the French reading below.

1.3. **BYTE DOMAIN.** Every byte takes either T(onic) or S(trong stress). In the **SIGN** notations of (1)–(3) S is written S, but T is written L, E or P (of which more anon). The **FORM** of S is strong stress and absence of pitch-jump on the S-syllable of the S-word, shown in the d&d notation by longish horizontal dashes at the *same* level as the preceding dot or dash. The **FORM** of T is an upward or downward pitch-jump on the S-syllable of the S-word, which thereby become T-syllable/word. Again, see the d&d notations—noting the “anticipatory positioning” required for the downjump in ea<sub>Λ</sub>chother.

The **MEANING** of T is contrast, i.e. rejection of alternatives, i.e. *new*. The **MEANING** of S is not-new but named or *specified*. This is a rather difficult concept. It does not mean *given*. In (3) the *Λ*cater.pillar| and *Λ*alice| are *specified*: if they were *given* one would say “they” instead. In terms of Edelman’s (1992) neural equivalent of consciousness, the “dynamic core,” one might say perhaps that *given* means active in, *not-new* peripheral activation or perception connecting to, and *new* activated by the dynamic core.

*Creation, revelation, selection.* On the basis of sequence, T-bytes subdivide into L, E, and P, short for Late nuclear, Early nuclear and Pre-nuclear tonic. This is the easy part of the serial relationships between locution-elements. More complex relationships were indicated in examples (1)–(3). If T is L(ate), it simply means that the last byte in the piece, and thereby the whole piece is *new* or a *creation*. If T is E(arly), that byte/thought is *new* within the following S(pecified) byte(s) in the same piece, i.e. a discovery or *revelation* within a not-new thought/idea/context. If T is P(re), that byte is at first a *new* choice from an open range of alternatives but then merely a *selection* from the (vastly) reduced range of alternatives allowed by the newer thought(s) following in the same piece.

1.4. **WORD DOMAIN.** All speech seems to require four degrees of (rhythmic) stress, no more, no less. Most syllables in a byte other than the S/T syllable are u(nstressed)syllables. A word with only u-syllables is a u-word. In its **FORM** it may be said to be rhythmically suppressed, its status or **MEANING** being automatic reflex or *given* concept. However, if an Englishman says ‘haʊ| ʌnˈkʌmfəʔə.bəl| ðəʔ ðə .wəz ɒn ə.tæk.Λ#, two of the eight shwa-syllables are less unstressed than the others. These may be said to have w(eak), the others z(ero) stress. Indeed, the human sense of rhythm does not allow for more than two z-syllables in a row or more than one before/after silence. This makes .wəz a w-word **MEANING** a *favoured* u-word, but only if an adjoining word, in this case ðə, “competes” for the w-stress.



#	English	French
12.	  S P= L <sup>-f</sup>    MuS <sup>R</sup> #	  L <sup>=R</sup>    P=u S L <sup>-CF</sup> #
13.	 	 
14.	  S <sub>1</sub>  MP= Su L+ <sup>f</sup> #	  P+ uP+ uuSu ME= uuuS <sup>CF</sup> #
15.	 	  ...uS P=M uE= uuS S <sup>CF</sup> #
16.	  S L+M <sup>f</sup>    MuS <sup>R</sup> #	  P= uL <sup>=f</sup> #
17.	  <i>(abridged)</i>	  MuuP+u S P+ P+ uuL <sup>=R</sup>    uP+ uMP= uuS uL <sup>-f</sup>
18.	  uE+ MS <sup>f</sup>    uS <sup>f</sup> #	  P+ uS uuuL+ <sup>f</sup>    uS <sup>f</sup> #
19.	  uL+ <sup>f</sup>   MP+ uuL+ <sup>R</sup> #	  P+ uL <sup>=R</sup> #
20.	  P+ uS... P+u S S L+  Su <sup>R</sup> #	  ...uL+... P+ S L+  Su <sup>R</sup> #
21.	  P   uL <sup>-f</sup> #	  P   L <sup>-CF</sup> #
22.	  L <sup>=f</sup>    P= P+ S S L+   <sup>f</sup> #	  MuMP= uP+ uuuP+ uuL <sup>=R</sup> #
23.	 	 
24.	  uL+ <sup>f</sup>    P+ S <sub>1</sub>   Lx <sup>R</sup> # Lx <sup>R</sup> # Lx <sup>f</sup> # Lf <sup>R</sup> #	 

Table 1. Comparison of the U.S. English and French readings.

In example (3) there is no such competition for the w in iʔʃʌðə|.fə səm ʔtaɪm.ʃ# so for simply remains a u-word. In-line, z-syllables are left unmarked, w-syllables preceded by a dot. In the dots&dashes notation all u-syllables are represented by a dot, slightly larger for w than for z.

Besides S, w and z, this leaves only so-called secondary stress as in the third syllable of ʔcater.pillar, ʔcater.pillar in (1)–(3), indicated by the small circle and in the d&d by a shortish horizontal dash. It is more convenient to call it M(edium) stress. M-syllables are not-primary in rhythm groups, so they cannot take T, but unlike u-syllables, they are not rhythmically suppressed or have vowels reduced to ə etc. A word with M but no S/T, like ʃlooked in (3) is an M-word. The MEANING of this SIGN is *sub-specification*.

1.5. TONE. T allows 4 kinds of pitch jumps or tone SIGNS: +/–/=/x. Their FORMS, as can be seen in (1)–(3) are upjump-fall on the T-syllable for plus-tone, downjump for minus-tone, upjump only for equal-tone. For the relatively rare “British” xtone (to be mentioned later) it is downjump-up-down on the T-syllable, “spreading” into the next one or two syllables, if any. Inside the text these pitch movements are “pictured” as small black triangles: ʔ for the +tone, ʌ for the –, ʔ for the = and ʌ for the x. Their functions or MEANINGS, best memorized again, are: normal, unobvious, *committed* choice of alternative for + tone, obvious, accepted, *expectable* choice for –, uncommitted, random, *equivalent* choice for =, *exclusive* choice for x. The bigger/smaller the up/down pitch-jump, the more/less *committed*, *expectable*, *equivalent*, *exclusive* the choice. For P-tonics + and = appear to be neutralized to *committed* only.

2. THE U.S. ENGLISH AND FRENCH READINGS ALTERNATED LINE BY LINE. A comparison of the U.S. and French readings is presented in **Table 1** (on the previous page).

3. SOME MORE COMMENTS ON THE ANALYSES. Our main comments are already contained in the above transcript and notes, but some further remarks may be made.

The most troublesome problem was ambiguity, at least less than certainty, between two perceptions. This seems to happen fairly often with F versus R (e.g., in lines 7E,<sup>2</sup> 8F, 11E, 12F, 17E, 22F), but also with C vs. not-C (14F, 15F), T vs S (6E, 11F), M vs u (5E) and +tone vs. =tone (20E, 22E), suggesting some tentative conclusions. First, such prosodic contrasts are not so much discrete as endpoints on a cline for hearers, and probably for speakers as well. Secondly, as long as they remain isolated instances, the “wrong” perceptions of these quite subtle distinctions do not make much difference to people’s—far from mathematically exact—communications. Thirdly, as one notices a kind of Necker Cube effect when “looping” ambiguous instances, perceptions seem to be determined by the (un)receptiveness of the relevant neurocognitive pathways besides the actual auditory input, in the words of Lamb “by virtue of the connections in our conceptual systems, which allow activation to spread downward through our perceptual systems” (2004:356). Such uncertainties, mostly on the pitch dimension, therefore do not seem to seriously invalidate the theory applied.

<sup>2</sup> Numbers refer to the line numbers in **Table 1**, with E for English and F for French.

However, when it comes to comparable ambiguities on the time/rhythm axis I am not so sure. One sometimes hesitates between drawing a word or a byte boundary, as in 20F, or drawing a piece or locution boundary, as in 24E. But more frequently, and more seriously, it can be difficult to decide between byte or piece boundary, e.g. in 1F and 3E. Perhaps the byte should just be regarded as a (potential) piece. Our SIGN division of words < bytes < pieces < locutions, semantically/neurocognitively of concepts < thoughts < ideas < sententias, seems rather less subtle than the melodic more/less distinctions just considered. The *nouns* used for both these SIGNS and their MEANINGS imply an either/or to the exclusion of a more/less view. This apparent clash between theory and fact throws some doubt on this part of the theory and thereby on our assumptions about the neurocognitive processes concerned. But the only alternative solution suggesting itself, i.e. to postulate innumerable degrees of boundaries or junctures instead of (four) units, seems even less attractive, if not unworkable. Moreover, even if the subtle phonetic differences do not always reach hearers' ears, as speakers we know that our motor processes in *same men, same n, say men*, have different origins and actually feel (and look!) different, and the same goes for *they flew in/ the planes* and *they flew/ in the planes*. If this is so, the either/or view does indeed make more sense than a more/less approach.

British and American descriptions of intonation suggest quite different systems. One reason for this short study was to find out how the prosody of American English differs from that of BBC or General British (GB) English. Somewhat surprisingly, the answer turned out to be: hardly. At least Sally Field's intonation is more like GB than that of the average Northern Irish or Welsh speaker, except that, apart from doubtful instances in 24E and 4E, it seems to lack the xtone. Indeed, this "exclusive" option seems the only non-universal, i.e. language specific SIGN, found so far, being confined to GB speakers wishing to express personal involvement, e.g., in storytelling to children. The rather fascinating =F pattern, discussed below, is also rare or nonexistent in her speech, barring the L= //rwell~// in 22E. C(alling) tunes are used elsewhere, e.g., for the Queen's routine proclamation "off with his head," but not in this passage. Sally Field's pitch range appears a little narrower and less low than in British English, although with occasional extremely high upward jumps for greater "commitment." As for rhythm, her English is slightly more staccato than GB, lacking the "drawling" of syllable endings and certain vowels, but apart from such timing differences her grouping and alternating of weaker and stronger syllables is essentially the same. In 5E, 8E, 9E, 14E, 16E one notices M-stressing of words which would tend to remain unstressed  $\pm$  vowel reduction in GB. Sally Field also makes meaningful, functional use of silences (indicated by carets) not foreseen in the theory, in 1E, 8E, 11E, 12E, 13E, 23E, 24E, and of reinforcing glottal stops in 4E, 24E. Summarizing, the prosody of (this type of) US English is virtually the same as that of GB in its organisation but differs somewhat on the phonetic level. Also, the *preferences* for certain options seem to differ.

For a linguist, if not for normal people, the French *Alice au pays des merveilles*, in the translation by Jacques Papy, is far more challenging (and very good for one's French, too). Part of the challenge was that this recording turned out to be a dramatized version for several actors, frequently with music during their speech. Also, Alice's voice is made to sound so fast and high-pitched that—as a nonnative observer—I had to make phonetic



transcriptions of it (in 8F, 11F, 18F, 22F, 23F) before I could make sense of it. If nothing else, these show the extent of vowel/syllable elision in French, not just as actually indicated by spellings like *n', c', j', qu', d', m', l', s'* before words beginning with a vowel, but also, where not indicated, before consonants. They also show up the phenomenon of *liaison* whereby final consonants become “initial” before a following vowel, so that both *il est ouvert* ‘it is open’ (3 words) and *il est tout vert* ‘it is all green’ (4 words) come out as *ile tu veer*. Clearly, if word division runs into some trouble with English *I’m, you’ll, we’ve, they’re*, etc., it does so more often in French. The dilemma is illustrated by our marking *j’é•tais* in 8F as two words rather than one.

As both transcript and recording show, the storyteller’s rhythmic and melodic organisation (1F, 2F, 3F, 5F, 6F, 10F, 24F) is, in the absence of C(alling) and =F patterns, as straightforward as Sally Field’s or that of any British newsreader and therefore—revealingly!—easily analyzed in terms of the distinctions originally set up for British English. Clearly (leaving tonal languages out of consideration for the moment) this again points to universal rather than language-specific distinctions. Keijsper (1985) discusses such universal “accentual” distinctions in Russian, Czech, English and Dutch, and I have noticed them also in the Indian language Gujerati.

A minor point to note here is that French speakers often make pitch-jumps not only on T but also on M syllables, e.g. in 2F, 3F, 21F. Also, of course, most syllable durations are very short compared to English. But there is clearly no question of French having a “machine-gun rhythm” or being “syllable-timed” in the sense of all syllables having the same duration and degree of stress. As pointed out by Paul Passy, and subsequently virtually ignored for the next one hundred years or so,

Nous appelons *groupe de force* l’ensemble des sons qui se *groupent* autour d’une syllabe relativement forte... En général, une groupe de force se compose de deux ou trois *mots* étroitement liés par *le sens*... La *syllabe forte* est la plus importante; c’est autour d’elle que se groupent *les moyennes et les faibles*, généralement en suivant le principe *rythmique*... (1913[1887]:46, 47, emphasis added)

As a definition of my “byte” (bite, byt?) for English I can hardly improve on this. How pleasing to find the same thing in *Les Sons du Français*! Note that it is about *grouping* into semantic-rhythmic units. The more usual term *feet* (which I prefer to avoid) seems to merely concern the *alternation* of stronger and weaker syllables, no more.

The two actresses impersonating the Caterpillar (*la chenille* is feminine in French, so he is now a she) and Alice both make extensive use of the Calling and =F pattern, again a pleasant surprise. La Chenille, clearly bored with Alice’s witticisms, uses “routine proclamation” C-SIGNS in 10F, 12F, 16F, 21F, 24F, an =F “shrug” pattern with the MEANING “uncommitted byte/idea, and no options” in 16F, and neither only in 4F.

When listening to **Sound Sample 1** one notices that the French Alice speaks in a very high “key,” each line at least one octave higher on average than Sally Field’s preceding it. Like other “voice qualities,” this option may be regarded as a *para*-phonological feature. Its function or meaning here is clearly to portray Alice as very little, and perhaps innocent as well. However,



at least one female weather forecaster on French TV5 invariably speaks in such childlike tones, suggesting that in French culture it may also be regarded as sweet and feminine.

Alice (7F, 8F, 9F, 11F, 13F, 14F, 15F, 17F, 18F, 19F, 20F, 22F, 23F) is made to use C for “routine proclamation” of quite long statements in 14F, 15F, 20F, thereby making them sound like “moans,” indeed “childish moans” in combination with the childlike very high key. Similarly, her =F “shrug” intonations in 7F, 9F, 11F, MEANING “equivalent, uncommitted, random, just to mention something, options closed” combine with the high key to make her sound rather helplessly uncertain at these points. The following nonvocal bodily “shrugs” distinguished by Desmond Morris seem equivalent to this =F vocal gesture and indeed generally accompany it:

(30) Eyebrows Shrug... [an] element of the complex shrug reaction, which also involves a special posture of the *mouth, head, shoulders, arms and hands...* although it may sometimes occur entirely on its own, is usually accompanied by a Mouth Shrug—rapid and momentary turning down of the mouth corners. This combination—what might be called the Face Shrug—frequently occurs in the absence of the other shrug elements... this action is typically linked with a “sad” mouth rather than a “happy” one. This should give it the *meaning* of a *mildly unpleasant surprise*, which is frequently the way it is used... typical of the speech of the chronic “complainer,” who seems to be perpetually surprised by the vagaries of life, but it is by no means confined to this particular personality type...

(115) The Shoulder Shrug... Sometimes the eyes are deflected upwards as if avoiding your gaze. This combination of actions indicates... a *fleeting acceptance of an inability to cope...* Most shrugs are signals of *ignorance* (*‘I don’t know’*), *indifference* (*‘I couldn’t care less’*), *helplessness* (*‘I can’t help it’*) or *resignation* (*‘There’s nothing to be done’*)... The use of shrugging *varies considerably from culture to culture* but it always has the same basis. In some Mediterranean countries its threshold of use is very low... In countries farther north, shrugging, like other gesture-replies, is considered impolite and it occurs less frequently, but *when it does appear it has similar roots*.

(2005: 30, 115, emphasis added)

The =F intonation is the falling counterpart to the common =R pattern MEANING “equivalent/random choice but options *open*” as in *ˈsevenˈteenˌ ˈeighteenˌ ˈnineteenˌ ˈapplesˌ ˈpearsˌ toˈmatoesˌ ˈwhoˌ ˈmeˌ yourˌ waterˌ ˈbuffaˌloˌ*. This is known as the “listing” pattern but it is also used, as the example suggests, for surprised questions, and, notably by US speakers, for tentative statements. In order to see the relationship with =F the reader may wish to replace these “final upturns” by slight downturns.

Until I happened to read Morris (2005) a few weeks ago, I used to refer to the =F “shrug” intonation as the “Brylcreem pattern,” having first noticed it in a Dutch TV commercial for that product (Van Buuren 1980:3). Suggesting something like “just to mention something, of course, what else?” it has since become virtually the standard for all Dutch TV commercials and is now spreading rapidly within current “populist” culture. As suggested by Morris,

To access this media element, please visit  
[http://www.lacus.org/volumes/35/media/vanBuuren\\_sample02.mp3](http://www.lacus.org/volumes/35/media/vanBuuren_sample02.mp3)

**Sound Sample 2.** =F intonation in the speech of an American linguist interviewed on Dutch television.

the popularity—or its opposite—of such patterns is clearly subject to fashion and culture over and above its “basic” function. Fascinatingly, exactly the same high-level tune (*cum* slight final downturn) is the characteristic pattern of Ulster English, and almost as common also in Scotland and much of Northern England. One would like to know when and why it developed in these “*unmediterranean*” areas. In Southern English accents including GB it is much rarer, so much so that it has been completely overlooked in the literature. The same seems to apply to US English. However, I recently happened to record one or two instances of the =F intonation in the speech of an American linguist by the name of Noam Chomsky, interviewed on Dutch TV (**Sound Sample 2**). According to Sydney Lamb, “the linguistic evidence is significantly more abundant than the narrow range usually considered in linguistic practice” (2004:326). Linguists do not seem to *observe* as much as they ought to. May this exercise in observation invite some more.



## REFERENCES

- CARROLL, LEWIS. 1865. *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*. London: Clowes.
- EDELMAN, GERALD M. 1992. *Bright air, brilliant fire*. New York: Basic Books.
- FIELD, SALLY. 2000. *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*. audio recording. London: Simon and Schuster.
- FLORY, MURIEL, PHILIPPE JOUARIS, JEAN-MARIE RICHARD & SOPHIE WRIGHT. 1987. *Alice au pays des merveilles*. audio recording. Paris: Gallimard.
- KEIJSPER, CORNELIA E. 1985. *Information structure*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- LAMB, SYDNEY M. 1999. *Pathways of the brain*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- . 2004. *Language and reality*. London: Continuum.
- MORRIS, DESMOND. 2005. *The naked woman*. London: Vintage Books.
- PAPY, JACQUES, trans. 1987. *Alice au pays des merveilles*. Paris: Gallimard.
- PASSY, PAUL. 1913[1887]. *Les Sons du français*, 7th ed. Paris: H. Didier.
- VAN BUUREN, LUCAS. 1980. On Dutch intonation. *Linguistics in the Netherlands 1980*, ed. S. Daalder & M. Gerritsen, 1–9. Amsterdam: North Holland.
- . 2008. Prosodic options for Alice and the Caterpillar. *LACUS forum* 34:291–301.



## LANGUAGE INDEX

This index contains references to languages, language groupings (families, subfamilies, etc.) and scripts (writing systems) or other methods of language representation as they are analyzed or otherwise mentioned in the text. Due to the prevalence of English and French as languages of discourse in this volume, all references to or use of English or French for purposes not related specifically to the analysis of them as languages are excluded. Language or dialect names are in **roman face** and language families and other groupings are in **SMALL CAPS**. The names of scripts or other language representation systems are in *italics*.

- Akkadian 188
- Afro-Asiatic 188, 196
- ALGONKIAN 21–29
- AMERINDIAN 199, 258, 265–67
- Arabic 194–95
- Armenian 194, 196
- Awiya 242–43
- Bantu 231
- Bengali 244
- Bulgarian 81
- CELTIC 154–56, 192
- Chinese (Mandarin) 7, 196, 260
- Czech 81
- Dera 239–40
- Dutch 59–65, 183
- Egyptian 189
- English 5–10, 13, 16–18, 21, 31–44, 45–55, 59–65, 103–7, 133–41, 157–62, 183–84, 197, 257, 260–61, 263, 271–80
- English, Black 173
- English, Middle 157
- English, Old 22, 157, 183
- English, Shakespearean 219–20
- English, Standard 173
- English, Standard British 228–29
- Eskimo 197
- Euphratic 192
- French 5, 7, 9–13, 16–18, 31–44, 69–78, 103–7, 123–30, 153, 174–80, 194, 225, 260, 271–80
- French, Cameroonian 206–15
- Gaelic 232
- Gascon 23
- Gaulish 190, 225
- Georgian 196
- German 7, 14–18, 197, 257, 260–63
- German, Old High 183
- German, Saxon 263–64
- German, Standard 263
- GERMANIC 184–85, 190, 192, 194
- Greek 153, 165, 183–85, 187–198, 200, 231, 233, 241–42
- Harappan* 193
- Hebrew 187–188, 190, 193, 195–97
- Hindi 196
- Hittite 22, 191
- Hungarian 199
- Hurrian 192
- Icelandic 22
- Icelandic, Old 223
- “Indian languages” 260, 263
- “Indian sign language” 260
- INDIC 193
- INDO-ARYAN *see Indo-European*
- INDO-EUROPEAN 7, 21, 153, 155, 188–200, 267
- Inuktitut 21, 25–29
- Irish 155, 196
- Irish, Old 154
- Italian 185, 194, 197

**ITALIC** 187, 192  
**Japanese** 7  
**Korean** 196  
**Japanese** 196  
**Latin** 153–54, 165–68, 171, 183–85, 190,  
 193–95, 197, 225, 233  
**“Mexican”** 260  
**Miwokan** 199  
**Navajo** 188  
**Ngbaka** 239  
**Norse** 194  
**Nostratic** 188, 191, 194–95  
**Ojibway** 22–25  
**Occitan (Old)** 166–71  
**Old English** See *English, Old*  
**Patwik** 199  
**Pennsylvania Dutch** 260  
**PENUTIAN** 199  
**Persian, Old** 231  
**Phoenician** 185  
**Pictish** 232  
**Pitjantjatjara** 7  
**Polish** 81–88, 260  
**Pre-Indo-European** 153–56, 190  
**Proto-Indo-European** 22, 153–56, 190  
**Provençal** 225  
**Punjabi** 243–44  
**ROMANCE** 153  
**Romanian** 23  
**Russian** 81, 83

**Russian, Old** 194  
**Sanskrit** 194  
**Semitic** 187–88, 193–97, 200  
**Serbian** 194  
**Serbo-Croatian** 81  
**SHOSHONEAN** 264  
**SLAVIC** 81–83, 85, 197  
**Slovak** 81  
**Slovene** 81, 83, 84, 197  
**SONORAN** 264  
**Sorbian, Lower** 85  
**Spanish** 23, 191, 194, 196, 260  
**Sumerian** 192–93  
**Swahili** 230–31  
**Swedish** 260  
**Tagalog** 7  
**Telugu** 7  
**TIBETO-BURMAN** 28  
**Tocharian** 198  
**Turkish** 194  
**Ukrainian** 81  
**Uralic** 198  
**“Utah sign language”** 263  
**Ute** 263  
**UTO-AZTECAN** 264  
**Vietnamese** 7  
**Welsh** 154–56  
**Welsh, Middle** 154  
**Yiddish** 260



## COLOPHON



**LACUS Forum 35: Language and Linguistics in North America 1608–2008: Diversity and Convergence** is set in Adobe Garamond Premier Pro 10/12 and Adobe Myriad Pro. The outer and inner covers are set in Adobe Formata. Additional characters were drawn from a variety of fonts. Phonetic characters are set in SIL Doulos. The Adobe Creative Suite 4.0 was used for volume production.



For enquiries concerning LACUS or to order previous LACUS Forum volumes please visit the LACUS web site at *<http://www.lacus.org>*.

